

A History of Modern France

FIFTH EDITION



Jeremy D. Popkin

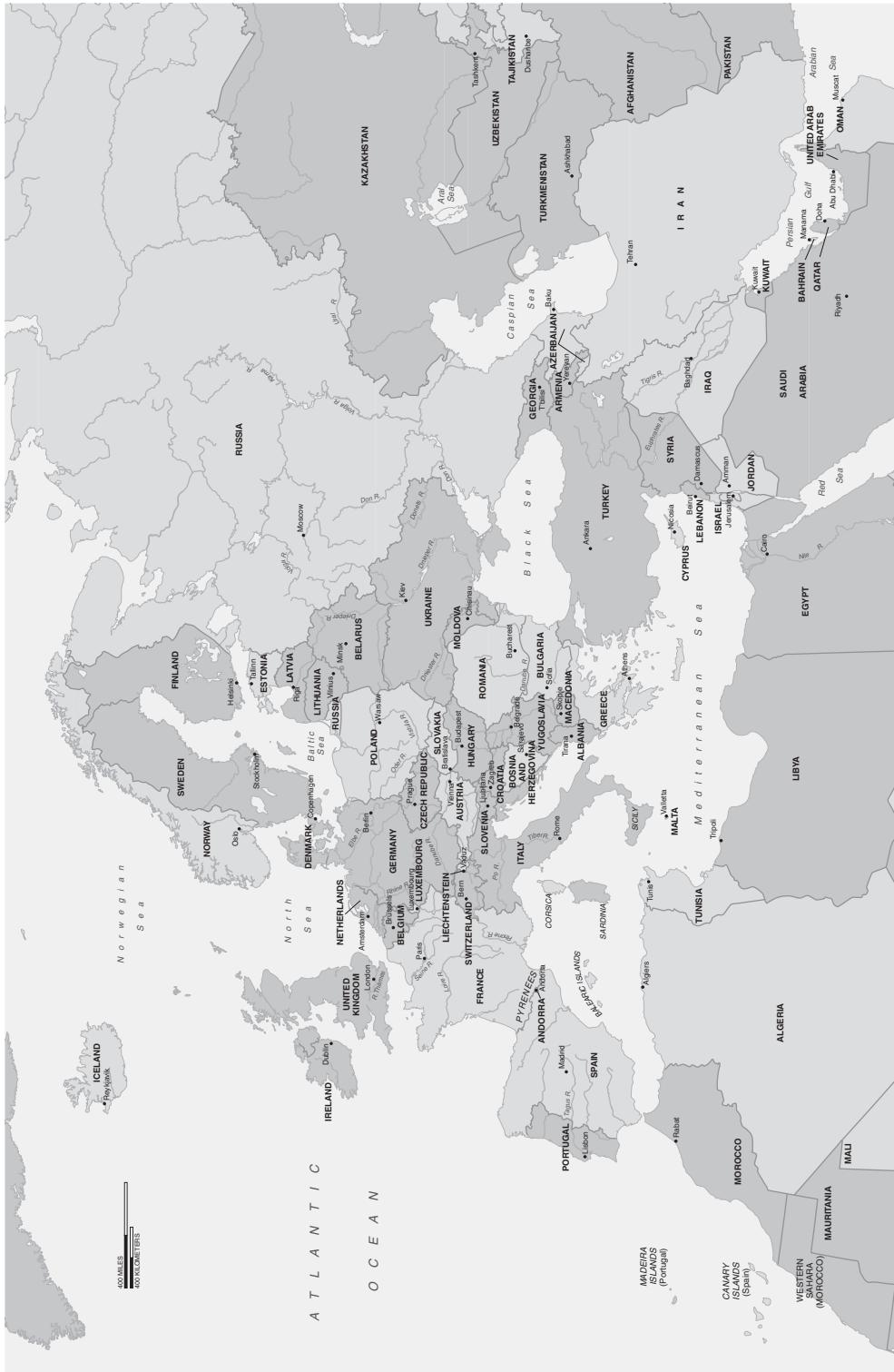
A History of Modern France

A History of Modern France offers a framework to understand modern French history through a survey of the dramatic events that have punctuated its history from the eighteenth century to the present day.

Covering events such as the French Revolution, the two World Wars and the more recent election of Emmanuel Macron and the “yellow vest” movement, the book takes a balanced approach to the competing interpretations of modern France inspired by its history. This edition has been thoroughly updated to incorporate the most recent scholarship on topics including French imperial history and the empire’s postcolonial legacy, the history of women and gender, and the French experience of World War I. A new section extends the narrative into mid-2019, and additional emphasis has been given to the role of historical memory in the making of French identity. Taking a chronological approach, the book is approachable for students and provides a clear and understandable picture of the history of modern France.

Supported by further reading that has been updated to include the most recent publications, the book is the ideal introduction to the history of modern France for students of this fascinating country.

Jeremy D. Popkin is the William T. Bryan Chair of History at the University of Kentucky (Lexington, Kentucky, USA). In addition to his new comprehensive history, *A New World Begins: The Story of the French Revolution*, he has published *Revolutionary News: The Press in France, 1789–1799*; *You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery*; and *A Short History of the French Revolution*.



Map 0.1 France and Europe Today

A History of Modern France

Fifth Edition

Jeremy D. Popkin

Fifth edition published 2020
by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2020 Taylor & Francis

The right of Jeremy D. Popkin to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

First edition published by Pearson Education, Inc. 1994
Fourth edition published by Pearson Education, Inc. 2013
Fourth edition reprinted by Routledge 2016

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Popkin, Jeremy D., 1948- author.

Title: A history of modern France / Jeremy D. Popkin.

Description: Fifth edition. | New York, NY : Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019048417 (print) | LCCN 2019048418 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781138557185 (hardback) | ISBN 9781138557192 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781315150727 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: France—History—18th century. | France—History—1789-

Classification: LCC DC110 .P67 2020 (print) | LCC DC110 (ebook) | DDC 944—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019048417>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019048418>

ISBN: 978-1-138-55718-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-55719-2 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-15072-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Swales & Willis, Exeter, UK

To my parents, who first introduced me both to France and to teaching; to my wife and children, who have shared many trips to France with me; and to my French friends, who have helped me to better understand their country's history and culture.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Contents

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>List of Figures</i> | xiii |
| <i>List of Maps</i> | xiv |
| <i>Preface</i> | xv |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | xviii |
| | |
| 1 “The Oldest Nation of Europe” | 1 |
| <i>A Variegated Hexagon</i> 1 | |
| <i>The Historical Heritage</i> 3 | |
| | |
| 2 Eighteenth-Century French Society and Economy | 7 |
| <i>Villages and Peasants</i> 8 | |
| <i>Cities and the Urban Population</i> 9 | |
| <i>Nobles</i> 11 | |
| <i>Clergy</i> 12 | |
| <i>A Changing Economy</i> 13 | |
| <i>The Growth of Population</i> 13 | |
| <i>The Agricultural Sector</i> 14 | |
| <i>Manufacturing and Commerce</i> 16 | |
| | |
| 3 Culture and Thought in Eighteenth-Century France | 18 |
| <i>The French Enlightenment</i> 18 | |
| <i>The Eighteenth-Century Public</i> 22 | |
| | |
| 4 A Government under Challenge | 25 |
| <i>The Absolutist System and Its Weaknesses</i> 25 | |
| <i>The Breakdown of Absolutism, 1750 to 1774</i> 28 | |
| <i>The Reign of Louis XVI, 1774 to 1787</i> 30 | |
| <i>France and the European State System</i> 31 | |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 5 Collapse of the Old Monarchy | 34 |
| <i>From Failed Reforms to Revolutionary Crisis</i> 35 | |
| <i>Meeting of the Estates-General</i> 36 | |
| <i>The Parliamentary Revolution</i> 37 | |
| <i>The Storming of the Bastille</i> 38 | |
| 6 Successes and Failures of the Liberal Revolution | 41 |
| <i>The “Abolition of Feudalism” and the Declaration of Rights</i> 41 | |
| <i>The October Days</i> 42 | |
| <i>A New Political Culture</i> 43 | |
| <i>The Accomplishments of the National Assembly, 1789 to 1791</i> 44 | |
| <i>The Revolution and the Reform of the Church</i> 47 | |
| <i>The King’s Flight and the Crisis of 1791</i> 48 | |
| 7 The Radical Revolution | 51 |
| <i>The Legislative Assembly and the War</i> 51 | |
| <i>The Revolt against Slavery</i> 51 | |
| <i>The Move toward War</i> 52 | |
| <i>The Overthrow of the Monarchy</i> 53 | |
| <i>The Convention and the Republic</i> 53 | |
| <i>Girondins and Montagnards</i> 54 | |
| <i>The Dictatorship of the Jacobins</i> 57 | |
| <i>Revolutionary Culture</i> 58 | |
| <i>The Great Terror and Thermidor</i> 60 | |
| 8 The Return to Order | 63 |
| <i>The Thermidorian Reaction</i> 63 | |
| <i>The Directory</i> 65 | |
| 9 The Napoleonic Years | 71 |
| <i>The Consul and the Consulate</i> 71 | |
| <i>The Napoleonic Empire</i> 76 | |
| <i>Elements of Opposition</i> 79 | |
| <i>The End of the Empire</i> 80 | |
| 10 The Restoration | 83 |
| <i>France in 1814</i> 83 | |
| <i>The Return of the Bourbons and the Hundred Days</i> 83 | |
| <i>The Consolidation of Constitutional Monarchy</i> 84 | |
| <i>Postrevolutionary France</i> 87 | |
| <i>The Revolution of 1830</i> 90 | |

| | | |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 11 | The July Monarchy and Its Critics | 92 |
| | <i>The Bourgeois Monarchy and Its Foes</i> 92 | |
| | <i>The Regime's Opponents</i> 93 | |
| | <i>Prophetic Voices</i> 95 | |
| | <i>Orléanist Liberalism</i> 98 | |
| 12 | A New Social World | 102 |
| | <i>The Beginnings of French Industrialization</i> 102 | |
| | <i>Bourgeois Society</i> 105 | |
| | <i>The New Urban World</i> 108 | |
| | <i>Cultural Trends</i> 111 | |
| 13 | The Revolution of 1848: The Crisis of Bourgeois Society | 115 |
| | <i>The February Revolution</i> 115 | |
| | <i>The Provisional Government</i> 116 | |
| | <i>The June Days and the Conservative Republic</i> 119 | |
| | <i>The Troubled Republic</i> 121 | |
| 14 | The Second Empire's Decade of Prosperity | 124 |
| | <i>The Empire's New Clothes</i> 124 | |
| | <i>Haussmann's Rebuilding of Paris</i> 126 | |
| | <i>Foreign Adventures</i> 130 | |
| 15 | The Second Empire in Difficulties | 133 |
| | <i>Domestic Policies in the Empire's Second Decade</i> 133 | |
| | <i>The Cultural Climate</i> 136 | |
| | <i>The Gamble of the Liberal Empire</i> 138 | |
| | <i>The Franco-Prussian War</i> 139 | |
| 16 | The Paris Commune and the Origins of the Third Republic | 141 |
| | <i>The Government of National Defense</i> 141 | |
| | <i>The Uprising of the Commune</i> 143 | |
| | <i>The Conservative Republic</i> 147 | |
| 17 | The Republicans in Power | 151 |
| | <i>French Parliamentary Democracy</i> 151 | |
| | <i>The Ferry Era</i> 152 | |
| | <i>The Social Bases of the Republic</i> 157 | |

x *Contents*

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 18 Economic Depression and Political Crises | 161 |
| <i>The Late-Nineteenth-Century “Great Depression”</i> | 161 |
| <i>The Boulanger Affair</i> | 163 |
| <i>Socialism, Anarchism, and Trade Unions</i> | 165 |
| <i>Catholics and the Republic</i> | 167 |
| <i>The Franco-Russian Treaty and the Fashoda Crisis</i> | 168 |
| 19 The Dreyfus Affair and the <i>Bloc Républicain</i> | 171 |
| <i>Dreyfus</i> | 171 |
| <i>The Bloc Républicain</i> | 175 |
| 20 Culture and Society at the Fin De Siècle | 179 |
| <i>Women in French Society</i> | 179 |
| <i>The Beginnings of the French Welfare State</i> | 181 |
| <i>Naturalism, Impressionism, and the Avant-Garde</i> | 182 |
| <i>Mass Culture</i> | 184 |
| <i>The Republic’s World’s Fairs</i> | 185 |
| <i>An Age of Anxiety</i> | 187 |
| 21 The <i>Belle Époque</i> | 190 |
| <i>The Second Industrial Revolution in France</i> | 190 |
| <i>The Years of Protests</i> | 193 |
| <i>The Onward March of the Avant-Garde</i> | 198 |
| 22 The Plunge into War | 201 |
| <i>Rising Tensions</i> | 201 |
| <i>The Shock</i> | 204 |
| <i>The Ordeal of the War</i> | 207 |
| 23 Crisis, Victory, and Disillusionment | 212 |
| <i>The End of the Union Sacrée</i> | 212 |
| <i>The Home Front</i> | 214 |
| <i>Clemenceau the “Tiger”</i> | 216 |
| <i>The Postwar Settlement</i> | 218 |
| 24 France between the Wars | 222 |
| <i>The Domestic Atmosphere</i> | 223 |
| <i>The Quest for Security</i> | 225 |
| <i>The Briand Years</i> | 226 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 25 The Illusion of Normality | 232 |
| <i>Economic Recovery</i> 232 | |
| <i>Postwar Society and Culture</i> 234 | |
| <i>The Descent into the Depression</i> 238 | |
| 26 From the Popular Front to the War | 243 |
| <i>The Crisis of February 6, 1934</i> 243 | |
| <i>The Popular Front</i> 244 | |
| <i>Responding to the Fascist Threat Abroad</i> 248 | |
| <i>France Enters Hitler's War</i> 250 | |
| 27 France in the Second World War | 255 |
| <i>The Debacle</i> 255 | |
| <i>The Vichy Regime</i> 257 | |
| <i>The Politics of Collaboration</i> 261 | |
| 28 The Road to Liberation | 266 |
| <i>Daily Life during the War</i> 266 | |
| <i>The Resistance and Charles de Gaulle</i> 267 | |
| <i>Liberation</i> 274 | |
| 29 The Revival of the Parliamentary Republic | 276 |
| <i>The Provisional Government</i> 276 | |
| <i>The Turning Points of 1947</i> 282 | |
| 30 From the Fourth to the Fifth Republic | 287 |
| <i>The "Sartre Years"</i> 287 | |
| <i>The Mendès-France Experiment</i> 289 | |
| 31 Politics and Economy in De Gaulle's Republic | 298 |
| <i>De Gaulle's Grand Design</i> 298 | |
| <i>Strong Government and Economic Development</i> 300 | |
| <i>Politics in the Gaullist Republic</i> 302 | |
| 32 Society and Culture during the "Thirty Glorious Years" | 305 |
| <i>The Renewal of the Church</i> 307 | |
| <i>A Social Transformation</i> 308 | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 33 May 1968 and the End of the Gaullist Era | 313 |
| <i>The Events of May 1968</i> 313 | |
| <i>The Pompidou Presidency</i> 316 | |
| <i>Giscard d'Estaing's "Advanced Liberal Society"</i> 318 | |
| <i>France and the Changing Economic Climate</i> 320 | |
| <i>The Intellectual Climate of the "Après-mai"</i> 321 | |
| 34 The Mitterrand Years | 324 |
| <i>The Elections of 1981</i> 324 | |
| <i>The "U-turn" of 1983</i> 326 | |
| <i>A Multiethnic France</i> 328 | |
| 35 France Enters a New Millennium | 334 |
| <i>Politics after Mitterrand</i> 334 | |
| <i>France, America, and Globalization</i> 339 | |
| <i>Domestic Issues in the New Millennium</i> 341 | |
| 36 A New Age of Instability | 344 |
| <i>From Chirac to Sarkozy</i> 344 | |
| <i>France and the "Great Recession"</i> 346 | |
| <i>The Hollande Presidency</i> 347 | |
| <i>The Strange Election of Emmanuel Macron</i> 351 | |
| <i>Appendix: For Further Reading</i> | 356 |
| <i>Index</i> | 372 |

Figures

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 3.1 An Eighteenth-Century Workshop | 20 |
| 5.1 <i>Reveil du Tiers Etat</i> | 40 |
| 8.1 Goodbye to French Liberty: Buonaparte Closing the Farce | 69 |
| 11.1 The Legislative Belly | 94 |
| 12.1 The Different Social Roles of Women | 108 |
| 12.2 The Revolt of Lyon's Silkworkers or Canuts in November 1831 | 110 |
| 16.1 The Paris Commune Uprising | 144 |
| 19.1 The Dreyfus Affair | 174 |
| 20.1 The Construction of the Eiffel Tower | 186 |
| 21.1 A Jewish Butcher's Shop in Paris | 191 |
| 22.1 The Impact of the War | 207 |
| 27.1 Propaganda Poster for the Vichy Regime's National Revolution | 260 |
| 28.1 Memories of the Resistance | 271 |
| 29.1 The Liquidation of the French Empire | 286 |
| 30.1 French Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle during His First Official Visit to Algeria | 295 |
| 33.1 Striking Citroen Factory Workers Marching in Paris in May 1968 | 314 |
| 34.1 The "affaire du foulard" of 1989 | 331 |
| 35.1 The Fast Pace of Technological Change | 338 |
| 35.1 A Diversity of Marianne | 342 |
| 36.1 Defacement of Emmanuel Macron's Campaign Posters | 352 |

Maps

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|-----|
| 0.1 France and Europe Today | ii |
| 0.2 France: Principal Geographic Features | xx |
| 6.1 Provinces and Departments | 47 |
| 12.1 Main Rail Lines in France, 1878 | 104 |
| 22.1 France in the First World War | 209 |
| 26.1 The French Empire, 1940 | 253 |
| 27.1 France during the Second World War | 258 |

Preface

Much has changed, in France and in the world, since the first edition of this book was written more than 25 years ago. By now, the last veterans of the “Grande Guerre” (the First World War) have died, and national leadership has passed on to a generation of men and women born long after the defeat of 1940. Events that helped inspire my own interest in French history, such as Charles de Gaulle’s creation of the Fifth Republic in 1958 and the massive strike wave of May 1968, now seem increasingly remote. The high-speed TGV trains that were regarded as technological marvels when France introduced them in the 1980s seem now as unremarkable as the Paris Metro, and as far as young foreign visitors know, the euro has always been French currency. Much has also changed in the way we write and study history. A book about “modern France” inevitably presumes that the French nation-state is an important subject to study, but today this premise is much less self-evident than it was even 20 years ago, even in France itself, where the collaboratively written volume *France in the World: A Global History*—an effort to show how the country’s history has always been intertwined with that of other parts of the world—has been a best-seller since its publication in 2017. Although France’s overseas empire has almost disappeared, historians writing about the country’s past have increasingly stressed that French history in the past four centuries cannot be understood without taking its colonies into account, and the impact of the immigrant populations who now live in European France reminds us that the legacy of imperialism still shapes the country. As the empire has shrunk, France’s involvement in what is now the European Union has increased; it is impossible to comprehend French life today without taking into account its ever-growing engagement with its neighbors. When the first edition of this book was written, it seemed natural that a history of modern France should emphasize national politics, fundamental social conflicts, and high culture. Now, teachers and students also want material about changes in gender roles, the evolution of French national memory, and the history of the Tour de France bicycle race.

Even if nation-states no longer seem like immutable realities, the perspective of national history still has its importance. France today is indeed part of a globalized world, but the signs of its distinctive national past are still clearly visible. The worldwide sense of shock when the medieval cathedral of Notre Dame caught fire and came close to being destroyed in April 2019 showed that not only the residents of the country, but even millions of people who have never visited Paris, care deeply about this unique part of Europe and the monuments that testify to its heritage. The French version of twenty-first century modernity is not the same as that of China, the United States, or even France’s closest neighbors, such as Britain and Germany. To understand

the France of today still requires a knowledge of events that took place within the boundaries of what the French call “the Hexagon.”

New To This Edition

- The chronological narrative has been extended to cover events up to mid-2019, including the election of Emmanuel Macron and the “yellow vest” movement.
- The role of historical memory in the making of French identity has been given more emphasis.
- The treatment of French imperial history and of the empire’s postcolonial legacy has been revised in light of the latest scholarship.
- New work on the history of women and gender has been integrated throughout the text.
- New perspectives on the French experience of World War I generated by the centennial of that event have been integrated in the text.
- Suggestions for further reading have been revised and updated, incorporating publications through 2019.

The dramatic events of the last decade in France—the impact of the “Great Recession” of 2008, the terrorist attacks of 2015 to 2016, the disintegration of long-established political parties and the election of the outsider candidate Emmanuel Macron in 2017, and the “yellow vest” protest movement of 2018 to 2019—have required not just a completely rewritten final chapter in this book, but a rethinking of much material in earlier parts of it. Present-day debates about French identity have been associated with radical changes in historical memory, such as the admission of the French role in the Nazi effort to exterminate the Jewish population during World War II and the public recognition of France’s role in the history of slavery in the western world. The chronological narrative has been extended to cover events through the spring of 2019. The bibliography of suggested readings has been thoroughly revised and incorporates new publications through 2019.

Even as some aspects of the book have changed, I remain convinced that the past two-and-a-half centuries of France’s history still constitute a fascinating story. The dramas of the French Revolution and the “dark years” of German occupation during World War II pose great questions about politics and morality. Personalities such as Napoleon, Honoré de Balzac, Charles de Gaulle, and Simone de Beauvoir evoke interest far beyond France’s borders. The artistic achievements of Eugène Delacroix and of the Impressionists make us want to know about the country and the times in which they lived. The ups and downs of France’s national soccer team, from the World Cup victory of 1998 to the players’ strike during the 2010 competition and the French return to the podium as world champions in 2018, are the stuff of lively arguments among sports fans.

The pages that follow are one historian’s effort to communicate the passion and the stimulation that he has experienced in visiting France over a period of nearly 70 years and of studying the French past for half a century. They do not pretend to give a definitive account of modern French history: the subject is too vast and the controversies concerning it too deep to permit such a thing. They do attempt to provide

a basic framework for the understanding of modern French history and—on issues where historians disagree—to outline fairly the competing interpretations that that history has inspired. This book reflects the contributions of hundreds of historians who have devoted themselves to the subject, both in France and in the many other countries where French history has inspired devoted scholars. Without this community of colleagues, a synthesis like this could never have been written. If this book helps teachers to transmit the pleasure that the author has found in striving to understand the history of the French nation and people, and if it encourages students to explore the subject further, it will have served its purpose.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the many reviewers whose comments on previous editions have helped keep this book accurate and up to date.

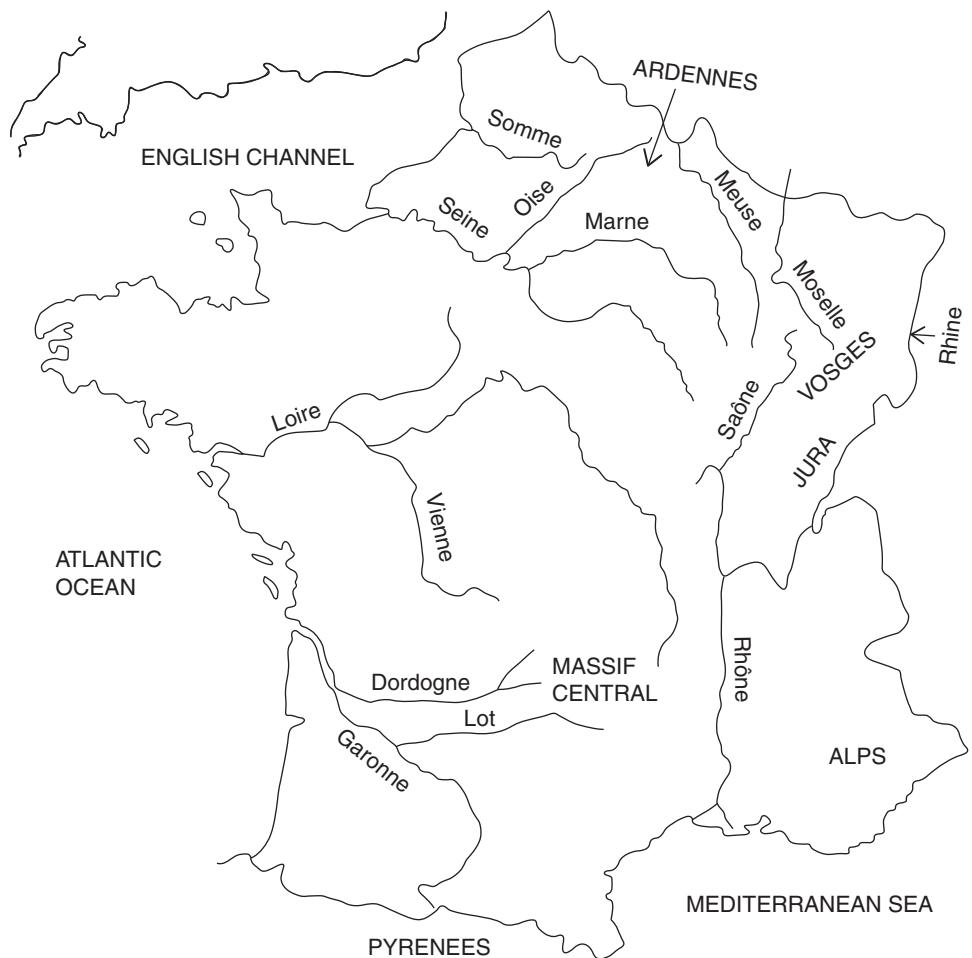
Jeremy D. Popkin



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>



Map 0.2 France: Principal Geographic Features

1 “The Oldest Nation of Europe”

In the year 486, Clovis, the leader of the Franks, one of the barbarian groups that had settled in the territories of the Roman Empire as its centralized structure weakened, gained control of most of the lands the Romans had called Gaul. With Clovis’s reign, these lands became an independent kingdom separated from the empire, with its capital in Paris—a new name for the city the Romans had called Lutetia. In addition to founding a Frankish or “French” kingdom, in 496 Clovis embraced the Catholic religion. Clovis’s kingdom became the ancestor of the modern French state, making France “the oldest nation of Europe.” Over the centuries, the boundaries of the territory ruled by Clovis’s successors changed many times. Under Charlemagne at the start of the Middle Ages, and again under Napoleon a thousand years later, France ruled much of the rest of Europe; at other times, the territories controlled by the kings of France shrank to the “île de France,” a small region surrounding Paris. The political entity Clovis had created never disappeared, however, and its core always remained the territories along the Seine and Loire rivers that had been the center of the original kingdom.

A Variegated Hexagon

By 1750, the European territories of the kingdom of France had taken on a shape fairly similar to that of the country today. Although the kingdom’s boundaries were the result of centuries of conflict with neighboring states, by 1750 they had become established in positions where natural features appeared to have dictated five of the sides. In the west, the English Channel, which the French call “la Manche” (the sleeve), forms a slanting diagonal, running southwest from Dunkerque to the tip of the Brittany peninsula. There, France’s Atlantic coast turns sharply inward, forming a great arc called the Bay of Biscay, which ends abruptly where the mass of the European continent meets the Iberian peninsula.

Separating France from Spain, a high chain of mountains—the Pyrénées—forms a straight line from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean, where France’s southern coast begins. The coastline runs east past the mouth of the Rhône river until it meets the southwestern corner of the Alps. The eighteenth-century French border then turned north, twisting and turning through the mountains east of the Rhône; the annexation of Nice and Savoy in 1860 has moved the present-day border with Italy further to the east. North of Switzerland, Louis XIV’s conquests, relatively recent in 1750, had extended the kingdom into German-speaking territory along the Rhine river. North of this region of Alsace, the frontier turns sharply to the northwest. The hazards of

2 “The Oldest Nation of Europe”

centuries of wars left an irregular line through the hills of the Ardennes and the plains of Flanders to the Channel coast. This is the only part of the French border not defined by any prominent geographic feature.

These boundaries defined a territory marked more by its diversity than its unity. In the west, three large rivers—the Seine in the north, the Loire in the center, and the Garonne in the south—form natural highways leading to the ocean, but their basins have few natural interconnections. The projection of the Brittany peninsula makes the trip from the mouth of the Seine to the mouth of the Loire a long and difficult voyage. The flat lands of northern France form part of the north European plain that sweeps across Germany and Poland into Russia, but the Ardennes, Vosges, and Jura mountain chains separate French territory from neighboring regions. South of the Loire, the worn-down volcanic peaks of the Massif Central form a rugged landscape extending almost to the Mediterranean coast. In this region, road travel remains slow and difficult even today. Movement has always been easier along the Rhône valley, a natural corridor linking Switzerland to the Mediterranean, but communications between this region and the rest of France are difficult: In the 1600s, it took six horses and eight oxen to pull a carriage over the pass between the Rhône and Loire watersheds near Roanne.

The creation of a unified France was a long struggle. In the eighteenth century, neither France nor any other European state was a compact territorial mass, sharply separated from its neighbors. Within France’s frontiers, there were enclaves of territory belonging to foreign rulers, such as the southeastern city of Avignon, owned by the pope. Furthermore, the frontier that marked the limits of the French king’s sovereignty did not always coincide with other important boundaries. The Mediterranean port city of Marseille and much of the territory along the Rhine lay outside of the kingdom’s tariff boundaries, able to trade freely with other countries but treated as “foreign” with respect to the rest of France. Important Catholic dioceses overlapped the frontier, so that some French priests owed allegiance to bishops in Belgium or the German states. The border did not follow linguistic frontiers: it took in German-speaking Alsace and Flemish-speaking lands around Lille, but not such French-speaking territories as Liège, Geneva, and Savoy. Nor was the French border in 1750 as fixed and permanent as it now seems. The France of the mid-eighteenth century was still expanding: Between 1750 and 1770, it acquired the important eastern province of Lorraine and the Mediterranean island of Corsica.

The territories that lay within the frontiers of France in 1750 differed tremendously in landscape and climate. Lucien Febvre, one of the great French historians of the twentieth century, wrote that “diversity is the essence of France.” In an area not much larger than many American states, it contains low coastal plains and Mont Blanc, Europe’s highest mountain peak, areas with some of Europe’s richest farmland and others with thin and unproductive soil, regions swept by the storms from the North Sea and others bathed in the sunlight of the Mediterranean. Geologists explain the differences in France’s landscape and soil by pointing out that the country is a patchwork of three kinds of formations. Some regions are ancient outcroppings of continental bedrock, covered with thin, poor soil, such as the Armorican Massif in Brittany and the Massif Central in the middle of the country. The flat or rolling countryside one finds around Paris and in the southwest lies above softer sedimentary rock, deposited in geological eras when this part of Europe was under the oceans; these areas include France’s richest agricultural soil. Finally, there are the Pyrénées and the Alps, high mountains, relatively recently thrust up.

These different geological formations would suffice to make France a variegated country, but they are compounded by marked differences in climate. France is the only European country that is half northern and half Mediterranean. Brittany, Normandy, the Paris basin, and the other northern and eastern provinces share the cool, humid climate of England and Germany. They receive ample rainfall, and their rivers flow steadily all year round. France's southern regions, such as Provence and Languedoc, are part of the very different Mediterranean world: hot and dry in the summer, with winter rains that can turn small streams into torrents and cause devastating floods. The crops that thrive in the two halves of the country are different, too: climate explains why cooking in northern France is based on the use of butter from cows that thrive on the grass and forage crops suited to a cool climate, whereas the cuisine of the south relies on olive oil, the product of a tree that cannot endure cold winters. The climatic differences between north and south have always tended to divide the country into two great regions, but each of these is subdivided into dozens of smaller lands, or *pays*. Life in the Alpine valleys along the Italian border is quite different from life in the cities in the nearby Rhône valley. The France of 1750 was a mosaic of little territories, each with its own characteristic landscape, crops, and customs.

By 1750, the possessions of the king of France also included overseas territories in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. France had been outstripped by other European countries in the race to establish colonies during the years following Columbus's voyages, but during the seventeenth century, it had succeeded in claiming much of present-day Canada and the Mississippi valley, several important island colonies in the Caribbean, a strip of land on the coast of South America, island bases for slave trading off the coast of West Africa, and outposts in India.

The Historical Heritage

Like the land, the population of eighteenth-century France was diverse, and subsequent history has made it even more so. Modern-day excavations continually add to our knowledge of the prehistoric inhabitants of France, whose monuments include the magnificent cave paintings in the Auvergne region that provide some of the earliest surviving evidence of the human drive for artistic expression. Later, other populations hunted and farmed the territory that has become northern France; in Brittany, they built mysterious structures of great upturned stones, or menhirs, similar to Stonehenge in England. These Celtic and Gaulish groups mingled with the Roman conquerors who followed Julius Caesar. Then this largely Romanized population absorbed Germanic tribes who invaded the area when the Empire gradually disintegrated, as well as the Norsemen or Normans, who gave their name to the province of Normandy. Although some homogeneous ethnic minorities maintained their distinct identities and languages—Basques in the southwest, Celtic Bretons in the western part of their peninsula—other groups, including immigrants from neighboring countries, merged into the general population. The conquests of the 1600s and 1700s added new ethnic minorities to the population: Flemings along the northern border, Germans and Ashkenazi Jews in Alsace. As a result of France's involvement in the slave trade and its acquisition of tropical colonies, small numbers of black people wound up in the metropole.

Diverse in geography, varied in ethnic background, France in 1750 was also a country of many tongues. French was the language of the educated throughout the

4 “The Oldest Nation of Europe”

country, the language of law, government, and religion, but it was not the everyday speech of most of the population. The ethnic fringes of the country clung to their own languages which were unrelated to French: Basque, Breton, Flemish, and the German dialect of Alsace. The entire southern half of the kingdom resisted the spread of the king’s French: This was the region of the *langue d’oc*, a variety of dialects derived from the same Latin roots as French but significantly different in sound and vocabulary from the *langue d’oil* of northern France. In the French colonies, enslaved black people created “creole” languages combining features of French and their native tongues, which came to be spoken by the whites as well. Differences in language were closely related to differences in culture, for each French region had its own characteristics. Gascons, according to folklore, were boastful—hence the French word *gasconnade* for empty talk—and quick-tempered; Normans were stingy and cautious.

To these differences were added others derived from the distinctive historical experiences of France’s different regions. Over the centuries, people in different parts of the country had often lived very different lives. Successive monarchs had acquired new domains, whose historical experiences had often been very different from that of the kingdom’s heartland. Many eighteenth-century French provinces, such as Brittany, Burgundy, and Provence, had once been independent duchies and principalities. Some had been brutally conquered: the memories of the thirteenth-century Albigensian crusade that subjected Languedoc to Catholic orthodoxy and rule from Paris took centuries to fade. Others, like the Habsburg-owned Franche-Comté around Besançon, had lived for centuries under non-French rulers. All had their own customs and local laws.

Church and Monarchy

Over the centuries, two institutions—the church and the monarchy—served to overcome linguistic and provincial boundaries, although both also functioned at times to create additional divisions that threatened French unity. Christianity had entered France during late Roman times, and by the Middle Ages only a small Jewish minority, officially expelled from the kingdom in 1306, had refused to accept it. The country was one of the main centers of medieval Christianity. It was near Paris that the first cathedrals in the distinctive Gothic style that later spread to most of Europe were built, and it was at the University of Paris that Thomas Aquinas gave medieval scholastic philosophy its most comprehensive form. But uniform orthodoxy was hard to impose throughout the kingdom, and disputes between opposing sects were the occasion for some of France’s bloodiest internal conflicts. In the early 1200s, King Louis VIII brought an army from northern France to stamp out the heretical Albigensians. In the sixteenth century, a militant Calvinist Protestant movement, whose followers became known as Huguenots, challenged the dominant church. From 1560 to 1598, France was torn by a religious civil war, and even after its end, pockets of Protestants in areas such as the port city of La Rochelle and the southern mountains of the Cévennes continued to resist Catholicism and, on occasion, royal authority. In 1685, king Louis XIV officially banned the Huguenot church, although his conquest of Alsace required him to tolerate its mostly Lutheran Protestant population and its Jewish minority. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of the population was now Catholic, and most of them had more contact with their priest than they did with any representative of the royal government.

The other institution that served to bind the diverse parts of France together was the monarchy. France's kings traced their ancestry to Clovis, who had succeeded in conquering the territory from the Pyrénées to the Rhine river and beyond by the time of his death in 511. Two hundred years later, a new dynasty, the Carolingians, replaced Clovis's Merovingian heirs. Under the greatest of the Carolingian kings, Charlemagne, France briefly became part of an empire that took in most of western and central Europe. The treaty of Verdun in 843 divided Charlemagne's territories into three kingdoms, one of which roughly corresponded to modern France. In 987, a third dynasty, the Capetians, took the place of Charlemagne's heirs. By this time, much of the kingdom had been carved up into baronies whose rulers gave only token loyalty to the king. Hugues Capet, the first Capetian monarch, and his immediate successors, directly controlled only a small territory around Paris, the “île de France.”

The Capetians, though they began with only a modest kingdom, gradually built up a large territorial state. Although threatened with disintegration many times throughout the centuries, the monarchy gradually extended both its territory and the scope of its power over its subjects. The defeat of the English at the end of the Hundred Years' War in the 1430s—thanks in part to Joan of Arc, an illiterate peasant girl whose role in inspiring the French forces made her a legendary figure, and the smashing of the neighboring Burgundian state that had grown up along France's eastern and northern borders in the 1470s—removed two dangerous rivals who could have prevented the growth of a large French monarchy. France was now set on a course of steadily growing power and territorial expansion which continued until the nineteenth century. Although the disparate territories that made up the kingdom clung to their historic privileges, they all acknowledged a common ruler, whose agents whittled away steadily at local rights. Generations of jurists, from sixteenth-century author Jean Bodin onward, elaborated a doctrine of royal sovereignty, imbuing French culture with the notion that the state should have one all-powerful authority at its center.

The Capital

Closely connected to the rise of the centralized monarchy was the development of a great capital city. Until the sixteenth century, the French kings moved frequently from one place to another, but after the mid-1500s they gradually made Paris their main residence. The growing royal bureaucracy and the wealthy nobles attracted to the court swelled the city's population, which was more than 300,000 in the time of Louis XIV and around 600,000 by the time of the French Revolution in 1789—making it, after London, the largest metropolis in the western world. Louis XIV, fearing the restlessness of the urban population, installed himself and his courtiers at Versailles, twenty kilometers outside the city, but Paris continued to be the real center of the kingdom. The demands of its inhabitants made it the economic motor of all of northern France. From Paris emanated all political authority, and it was also the country's cultural and intellectual center, home of the royally supported academies for literature, science, and the arts, of the country's major theaters, and of its major publishers. The concentration of so many different activities in a single location created a permanent cleavage between the capital and the rest of the country—the provinces. To the present day, this centralization of authority in Paris and its attraction for the liveliest and most ambitious minds of the country and many other parts of the world have continued to characterize French life. So, too, has a certain fear of the great city and

6 “The Oldest Nation of Europe”

its restless population: Louis XIV was certainly not the last French ruler to be preoccupied with keeping the capital under control.

Cultural Heritage

The church, the monarchy, and the influence of the capital worked to draw the different parts of France together; the country’s high culture served not only to unite its educated elites but also to suggest that France was the center of a larger European civilization. French had emerged as a literary language in the Middle Ages in texts such as the *Song of Roland* and *The Romance of the Rose* and by the eighteenth century French literature had accumulated a rich heritage of poetry, drama, and philosophy. Only French writers, the Enlightenment author Voltaire claimed, especially the dramatists and poets of the age of Louis XIV, had achieved the same harmony and perfection of form as the great Greek and Latin authors of antiquity. Even if French had not yet conquered the other languages spoken within the kingdom, by the eighteenth century it was spreading throughout the European world, replacing Latin as the common language of educated men and women. French “can be called the language of all nations, equally useful to the nobility, to merchants, and above all to people travelling for business or pleasure,” one eighteenth-century journalist wrote.¹ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, French styles of art, dress, cooking, and etiquette were being imitated by rulers throughout the rest of Europe. To France’s elites, the superiority of their highly developed culture and its vocation to spread far beyond the country’s borders seemed obvious.

Part of the reason for French culture’s broad appeal was its enormous variety: rather than expressing a unified national spirit, it incorporated many conflicting impulses. The bawdy works of the early sixteenth-century novelist François Rabelais, drawing on the earthiness of popular culture to mock learned traditions in philosophy and theology, contrasted with the thoughtful essays of Michel de Montaigne, who arrived at a skeptical and relativist view of the world. The seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes exalted the power of human reason and argued—in a clearly articulated style that brought a new precision to the language—that man could comprehend the nature of God and the universe. A generation later, Blaise Pascal, in equally clear and striking words, maintained that reason itself led man to a recognition of his need for religious faith. The conflict among enjoyment of the pleasures of life, confidence in the powers of reason, and a need for belief was deeply woven into French culture.

The past had thus bequeathed to eighteenth-century France a rich and complex legacy. A country of great variety—ethnic, linguistic, and cultural—the kingdom was nevertheless drawn together by common religious and political institutions. Its kings looked to expand their territories as their ancestors had, but it was above all France’s thinkers and writers, celebrating the spread of its language, who gave the country a sense of universal mission.

Note

1 Cited in Jeremy Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 44.

2 Eighteenth-Century French Society and Economy

One of eighteenth-century France's most complex inheritances was its social structure. In the Middle Ages, a powerful image of a society divided into three fundamental groups, or estates—"those who pray, those who fight, and those who work," or clergy, nobles, and commoners—had pervaded French thought. But this simple division had never been adequate to describe the reality of French life. The clergy included parish priests, powerful bishops, members of monastic orders, and the numerous nuns who provided vital social services. Nobles were not all warriors, and the category of commoners ranged from wealthy bankers and merchants to rural peasants, urban artisans and unemployed beggars. The idea that the population was made up of distinct groups with specific functions and privileges did correspond to reality, however. Objecting to a reform proposal that would have abolished the legal privileges of many of these groups in 1776, the judges of the *Parlement* of Paris, the kingdom's highest law court, opposed the idea that French society should be turned into a world where every individual was "an isolated being, dependent on himself alone."¹ Yet within these groups, the balance between individual and corporate claims was changing rapidly.

The most fundamental social unit in the eighteenth century was the family. Family imagery pervaded the period's thought: The king was called the father of his subjects, and family dramas were a favorite subject for popular painters such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze. French society provided little place for those who were not part of a family household: Orphans and widows who could not move in with relatives were likely to live in grinding poverty, and the authorities kept close watch over single men without a fixed residence, considering them potential criminals. For most of the population, the family was above all an economic unit, rather than a focus for emotional ties. This was as true of the ambitious noble royal official Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, writing to his father about the financial resources of his intended, as it was among the poor. Peasant households needed the combined labor of husband and wife, as well as that of their children, to support themselves. The tendency of urban artisan families to send newborn babies to rural wet nurses so that the mother could continue working shows how economic pressures dominated family decision-making.

Although economic considerations formed much of the basis of family life, other aspects were important, too. A family was bound together in defense of its honor and good name; lingering prejudice still inflicted humiliation on relatives if a family member was convicted of a crime. The *lettres de cachet*, or arbitrary arrest warrants, which struck many critics as evidence of royal tyranny, were in fact most often solicited by family heads to punish relatives whose behavior threatened the family's stability or reputation. The Diamond Necklace Scandal of the 1780s, which involved rumors that

8 Eighteenth-Century French Society and Economy

Queen Marie-Antoinette had committed adultery, brought a stain of dishonor to the royal family itself and contributed to the undermining of respect for the monarchy.

Wealthy bourgeois and aristocratic families were not as completely shaped by economic necessity, and some of them were more influenced by new cultural models of family life such as those propagated in the best-selling novels of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which stressed the importance of affection between husbands and wives and urged mothers to devote themselves to the raising of their children. But even among the wealthy, the emotionally close-knit family was exceptional. Marriages were more often contracted with a view to keeping the family's wealth and property together and promoting its social standing than because of love between the partners. For the aristocracy, at least, extramarital affairs were considered a normal escape from these loveless matches. French law strongly favored the husband over the wife, but, in contrast to England, women had some protection for the dowry they brought into a marriage.

Villages and Peasants

Above the level of the family was that of the local community. For some four-fifths of the kingdom's eighteenth-century inhabitants, this community was the rural peasant village, a compact cluster of houses whose population ranged from 500 to 2,000 inhabitants. A village was made up of households, each farming the land that it owned or leased or working for other landowners in the fields immediately surrounding the village. Aside from the village priest, the *curé*, peasants made up the whole of the village community. To find craftsmen who made their living in their workshops, to go shopping, or to find lawyers, doctors, or government officials, peasants had to trek to the nearest town.

The village community controlled many important aspects of its members' lives. Villagers agreed on when to plant crops and when to harvest them. They shared the use of communally owned pastures for their livestock and forest lands where they gathered firewood. The village was usually coterminous with the parish, and the church served as the center of community life, bringing everyone together for conviviality as well as for prayer. Villagers knew all about each other's lives, and they tended to look on outsiders with suspicion. Young men and women usually married within their own village, or found mates from the closest neighboring villages.

These close-knit communities were not necessarily harmonious ones. Village life was marked by strong divisions, particularly between the minority of especially prosperous peasant families who tended to dominate the community and the majority of poorer, sometimes landless, fellow villagers. The better-off peasants, the *coqs du village*, were often those who leased the estates of local noble *seigneurs*. They owned their own draft animals and rented them out to their poorer neighbors to plow their fields. These wealthy families were the leaders of the community. In his autobiographical novels, the eighteenth-century French writer Restif de la Bretonne, the son of a wealthy Burgundian peasant farmer, described such a household. His father worked hard but reserved for himself the most dignified and prestigious farmwork, such as guiding the plow. Humbler tasks, such as caring for the livestock, he delegated to the women of the family or to hired servants. Restif's father, educated enough to read a little, dominated his family dinner table, directing conversation and religious observances. He acted as agent for the local *seigneur* and

served as a judge in minor village controversies. He had his clientele of dependents among the poorer peasants of the village, doing them small favors and representing the interests of the community to the outside world in exchange for their loyalty. And he was able to invest in his children's future, sending some of his sons to school and preparing them for careers that would take them out of the ranks of the peasantry altogether.

Most eighteenth-century peasants lived a much less comfortable life. Poor peasants worked as day laborers for their wealthier neighbors, farmed as sharecroppers on behalf of urban property owners, or supplemented their farming incomes by doing manufacturing tasks such as spinning and weaving in their own homes. Some migrated to other regions for part of the year, like the masons from the Limousin region who traveled regularly to Paris to work on construction projects. Life was difficult and precarious for such families. A bad harvest could reduce poor peasants to grinding misery; illness or accident could ruin them. At times, as much as one-fifth to one-seventh of the population was homeless or forced to rely on charity for survival. With the benefit of hindsight, historians can recognize that eighteenth-century French peasants were modestly better off than their ancestors and also than their contemporaries in most other parts of continental Europe. But the peasants themselves were conscious above all of how difficult and insecure their lives were, and of how much of their work went to benefit noble, ecclesiastical, and bourgeois landowners who lived much more comfortably.

Cities and the Urban Population

Urban communities contained less than 20 percent of eighteenth-century France's population. Just as the villages were divided between wealthy and poorer families, the urban working-class population ranged from prosperous master artisans, owners of their homes and enterprises, to penniless, uneducated day laborers living in miserable rented rooms. Divided by their economic condition, these working town dwellers were nevertheless parts of close-knit neighborhood communities. The men drank together in the neighborhood cabarets, women met in the marketplace, and neighborhood children roamed the streets together in their free hours, building social bonds that transcended family ties and gave a sense of local identity that excluded residents from other parts of town and members of the upper classes.

The skilled tradesmen whose crafts were organized into guilds made up the aristocracy of France's working population. The eighteenth-century Parisian glazier Jacques-Louis Ménétra differed from most of his fellows in that he later wrote his autobiography, but in many ways his experiences were typical of his social milieu. Ménétra entered his profession because his father and several other relatives had been glaziers before him. Like most Paris artisans, he had a certain amount of schooling before he started his apprenticeship. After several years spent learning the specialized skills of his trade in Paris, he spent several more years on his *tour de France*, traveling from city to city, stopping wherever he found work. During these years when he was not part of a stable community, Ménétra belonged to one of France's several journeymen's brotherhoods, or *compagnonnages*. The *compagnonnage* hostels welcomed him in each town he came to and integrated him into local economic and social networks.

Women of the urban working classes had very different life experiences. Only a handful of female occupations, such as seamstresses, were organized into guilds, and

10 Eighteenth-Century French Society and Economy

women never tasted the experience of freedom that was part of the journeyman's *tour de France*. Master artisans did need wives to help run their shops; in addition to helping with some of the regular work, wives often managed the money and provided food and lodging for both their own family and for the apprentices and journeymen who lived with their employer. But women were barred from most guilds, and could usually run a shop only if they survived their husbands. Most male workers were also much less well off than skilled artisans. Guild rules, lack of capital, and government regulations limited the number of masters in many trades, and condemned most journeymen to a lifetime of working for others.

Below the skilled artisans was the mass of the urban population, the day laborers, street vendors—often women, who did most of the marketing of foodstuffs and other domestic goods—unskilled workers, and domestic servants. The truly destitute—beggars, prostitutes, and criminals—made up 10 to 20 percent of the population in France's largest city, Paris, where urban culture was most fully developed. They were outnumbered by the working poor, those who had a more or less permanent home and occupation but who often lived on the edge of poverty. Property inventories show that few of Paris's working families owned more than a handful of household utensils and one or two basic pieces of furniture. By the second half of the eighteenth century, city workers were beginning to accumulate a few inexpensive luxuries—a small mirror that facilitated personal grooming was a common acquisition—but most of their earnings continued to go into paying for food and lodging.

Although most city residents were poor, urban populations also included wealthier groups, the bourgeoisie, and, on occasion, the nobility. Of all the social groups in eighteenth-century France, the bourgeoisie are the hardest to define. Members of the bourgeoisie owned property that went beyond the small plot of land that a peasant might possess or the workshop and tools of an artisan. In contrast to peasants and artisans, the bourgeois did not perform manual labor but, unless he had become wealthy enough to live as a *rentier* (supported by income from property and investments), the bourgeois did work. Unlike the noble, however, members of the bourgeoisie lacked a legal guarantee of their social status, which depended on wealth, occupation, and lifestyle. The most numerous category among the bourgeoisie was the merchants, ranging from small shopkeepers in France's innumerable towns and cities to heads of great international trading firms. The latter accumulated enough wealth to buy landed estates and live in the same style as the nobility. Compared to the number of merchants, the fraction of the bourgeoisie who could be classified as manufacturers was small. On the other hand, members of the educated professions loomed large in the makeup of the preindustrial bourgeoisie. Lawyers were among the most prestigious of these professionals, considerably more so than doctors. Members of the bourgeoisie filled many lower-level government posts and actively sought local positions, such as churchwarden for their parish. Many of the clergy, especially in cities, were of bourgeois origin as well.

Education and lifestyle served to give this disparate social group a certain degree of unity. Nearly every bourgeois occupation required the ability to read, write, and calculate. Bourgeois homes reflected a different style of life than that of the lower classes. Whereas peasants and urban workers generally lived with their family in a single room, bourgeois families had houses or apartments divided into several rooms, and with considerably more furniture. They thus had greater privacy and the opportunity to develop a greater sense of individual identity than did members of the poorer classes.

Not only did bourgeois families own more consumer goods, they also had savings which they could invest and which put them above the economic worries of the lower orders. Prosperous bourgeois families bought rural landholdings and profited by renting their fields to peasants; they invested in royal bonds and thus acquired a strong interest in the solvency of the king. Bourgeois families also invested heavily in promoting their children's social mobility. Sons of successful merchants received an education that qualified them for professional careers, and bourgeois families often invested in the purchase of governmental offices, particularly those whose possession led eventually to a title of nobility. Women from the bourgeois classes also commonly received some education in the eighteenth century, although less than men. Like the wives of artisans, merchants' wives often worked in the family enterprises. But women were excluded from the educated professions, which remained exclusively male preserves.

Nobles

In many respects, the wealthiest strata of the bourgeoisie resembled the nobles who made up the highest level of France's social pyramid. The distinguishing characteristic of nobility was the possession of a hereditary title and its associated special privileges. Centuries earlier, the nobility had established itself in France as a warrior class, but by the eighteenth century, most titled families were in fact the descendants of successful merchant dynasties who had slowly acquired land, titles, and offices that had enabled them to shed the memory of their lowly origins. Military nobles, the *noblesse d'épée*, or nobles of the sword, often found themselves snubbed by nobles whose titles were based on membership in one of the royal courts, or *parlements*, the so-called *noblesse de la robe*, or by families whose claim to fame was several generations of service in the royal bureaucracy.

Whatever their origins, the wealthy nobles of the eighteenth century were landowners, and the nobility as a class controlled a disproportionate share of France's wealth. Less than 2 percent of the country's population, nobles owned perhaps 25 percent of the land. Noble estates, or *seigneuries*, varied greatly in size—there were poor nobles as well as rich ones—but all nobles enjoyed certain special privileges. Noble landowners were exempt from some of the most onerous taxes; in most regions, they did not pay the *taille*, the basic head tax. By virtue of their status, they were entitled to a variety of payments from the peasants who lived on their domains, and they enjoyed lucrative monopolies, such as the right to compel the peasants to grind their grain at the noble's mill. Along with these income-producing privileges went honorific privileges that emphasized the nobles' special status: the right to wear a sword; the privilege of engaging in the hunt and of raising doves and rabbits, which frequently devastated peasants' fields; the right to erect a weathervane, which set nobles' houses apart from all others; and special seating in the local church.

Most of these special privileges harked back to the medieval past, but the power and prestige of the nobility were rooted in more modern developments as well. Formally or informally, noble status was required to hold most high positions in government and church, which meant that noble families profited from the handsome livings that such posts provided. Although nobles were barred from engaging in most branches of trade and manufacturing, they were as likely as wealthy bourgeois to invest in lucrative business enterprises and to buy government bonds. Consequently, the economic interests of nobles were not sharply distinct from those of the bourgeoisie.

12 Eighteenth-Century French Society and Economy

Culturally, too, nobles were not sharply cut off from the upper strata of the bourgeoisie. Both groups were well represented among the purchasers of “Enlightenment” works, and in the audience of the latest plays and concerts. Nobles and educated commoners both participated in the activities of provincial academies, a form of intellectual sociability widely implanted in France’s larger cities, and in the Masonic lodges that spread even to relatively small towns in the second half of the eighteenth century. In Paris, the salon, a regular meeting place for writers, artists, and wealthy patrons, often brought bourgeois intellectuals together with leading aristocrats. Intermarriage between noble and bourgeois families was not unknown: It frequently served as a discreet mechanism for infusing some of the bourgeoisie’s growing wealth into the coffers of impecunious aristocratic families. In law, the distinction between nobles and commoners remained clear, but in the ordinary course of life, members of the two groups often seemed to have much in common.

Noble women, although they did not enjoy all the privileges that male aristocrats did, were in many ways less restricted than their poorer sisters. In particular, they were in the vanguard of a new attitude toward family life. Noblewomen were among the most likely to adopt the new model of the affectionate family, devoting themselves personally to the care of their young children, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau had urged, rather than leaving their rearing entirely to servants.

Clergy

Within French society, the clergy formed a special corporate group with its own social hierarchy and its own gender divisions. Only men could become priests, while the approximately 50,000 nuns in French convents at the time of the Revolution were largely confined to traditional female functions, such as teaching in girls’ schools and ministering to the sick. At the top of the church’s hierarchy, a wealthy elite of bishops and abbots, drawn from noble families, monopolized the most prestigious positions. The occupants of these positions enjoyed substantial incomes from the church’s own extensive properties and from the tithes that the laity had to pay to the church. Often, like many secular nobles, these aristocratic churchmen did little to earn their income. Some bishops rarely visited their dioceses, and much of the income from tithes went to absentee clerics who performed no real religious functions. The working sector of the church was made up above all of the parish clergy, the *curés* who saw to the spiritual needs of the population and the nuns and monks who ran many of the country’s schools and welfare institutions. A clerical career was a common choice for younger sons from prosperous peasant and petty-bourgeois families. A son put into the church would be assured of a relatively prestigious career and would not claim a part of the family estate.

The curé was an important part of community life. In a village, he was usually the most educated resident and served as a link between the peasants and the outside world. He kept the register of births and deaths, and his participation was necessary at weddings and funerals. He also exercised a degree of authority over the laity, and indeed often came into conflict with them when he tried to enforce church prohibitions on certain popular festivals or oppose superstitions that the church condemned. Despite his important functions, the curé often found himself shabbily treated by the church hierarchy. Curés in some regions, such as Brittany, could generally live comfortably from their parishioners’ tithes and the income from the property attached to their churches. In other areas, most of the church’s income went to absentee clerics, and the local curés had to

make do with a meager salary. The church thus had its own version of the larger conflict between a wealthy privileged elite and a mass of poorer members who often felt unjustifiably exploited by their superiors.

Like the clergy, French society as a whole was also split by multiple conflicts at the end of the eighteenth century. Historians have differed over which social fault lines were most important: that separating nobles from commoners, as the rhetoric of the French Revolution and the Marxist scholarly tradition suggest, or the line separating all the wealthy, both noble and bourgeois, from the rest of the population, as many historians in recent decades have contended. The empirical evidence that nobles and wealthy bourgeois invested in the same kinds of property, read the same books, and shared some of the same lifestyle is strong; so is the evidence that nobles tried hard to safeguard their exclusive privileges and that, when the crisis of 1789 arrived, much of the population regarded them as a distinct group. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the division between rich and poor had clearly become the dominant social issue in French public life, but in the eighteenth century, the complex differences in inherited social status continued to cloud the picture. The special privileges that separated nobles from the far more numerous members of the Third Estate (commoners) had come to seem increasingly unjustified as the nobility had ceased to perform a distinctive social function. Under the right conditions, protest against those privileges could unite a broad array of groups that otherwise had little in common, from wealthy lawyers and merchants frustrated by the nobles' monopoly on prestigious posts to humble peasants infuriated by the dues they owed the local seigneur.

A Changing Economy

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the European world was just beginning to experience the rapid changes in technology that would eventually be labeled the “industrial revolution.” To feed and clothe themselves and provide the other commodities they needed, the French still largely depended on hand tools and on power provided by draft animals, water wheels, and windmills. This preindustrial economy was not a stagnant one, however. In the middle of the eighteenth century, France began to depart from the pattern of the past in several significant ways. Some of these changes, such as the beginning of growth in the overall population and in the productivity of the economy, were hardly noticed at the time. Others, such as the development of a new secular culture and the articulation of challenges to the absolutist monarchy and the traditional social hierarchy, were readily apparent—at least to the educated and literate. In 1750, Jacques Turgot, a young nobleman about to embark on a career in the royal administration, wrote an essay introducing a new concept in French thought: the idea of progress. France and the world were not just bound to change, he predicted, but they were changing for the better: becoming more prosperous economically, better administered, more intelligent. Turgot’s criteria of progress were those of a new era, the modern world.

The Growth of Population

One of the most important changes occurring in the France of Turgot’s day was the beginning of a steady, long-term rise in the country’s population. In the eighteenth century, neither the French government nor any other European country carried out

14 *Eighteenth-Century French Society and Economy*

censuses, although French royal officials of the time were increasingly interested in the population question and used what data they could find to make estimates. Thanks to intensive historical studies, we now know what contemporaries could only guess: France's population was indeed rising markedly. This increase was one of the surest signs that fundamental change was taking place in the country.

From 1500—when it recovered from the devastating losses caused by the Black Death—to 1700, France's population seems to have fluctuated within fairly narrow limits. The total population seems to have been not much more than 20 million in 1700. When Louis XIV died in 1715, however, a new era in French population growth was already beginning. The terrible winter of 1709–1710 turned out to be the last of France's old-style famine crises, marked by a “dismal peak” in the death rate that wiped out the population increase of several previous decades. In the 20 years after Louis XIV's demise, France's population reached and probably surpassed the highest level it had ever previously attained. After a brief leveling off in the early 1740s, the kingdom's population began a steady march upward to levels never before reached. By 1770, France's population had probably reached twenty-six million, and, even though the rate of increase then slowed, metropolitan France of 1789 had a population of around 28 million. In addition, there were about 800,000 enslaved black people and 100,000 free people in the French colonies.

Historians have not reached a consensus on the causes of this phenomenon, part of a general trend affecting the entire European world. Some have credited it primarily to the lower death rates due to the disappearance of certain diseases, notably the plague, which last struck France in 1720, and to medical developments, such as the improved birthing procedures taught to midwives after mid-century. Improvements in hygiene, such as the growing use of cheap undergarments, which could be changed frequently, reduced some health hazards. Other historians have emphasized changes that raised birth rates. A growing economy, partly stimulated by the growing population with its increased demand for goods of all kinds, created job opportunities that allowed young people to get married earlier than they would have in previous generations, thus increasing the number of births. Better farming methods and the introduction of new crops may have increased the food supply and thus kept the population healthier. The wars of the eighteenth century were smaller in scale than those of Louis XIV's time, and they were not fought on French soil, which spared the population the devastation that always accompanied military campaigns.

Whatever its causes, the population increase had effects on every area of French life. More people meant a greater demand for food, which pushed the prices of agricultural products upward. Population growth increased the demand for manufactured goods. A growing number of peasants competed for the right to farm the available land. As the French population exceeded any previous level, French society was forced to change in a variety of ways. The larger-than-normal generation born between 1750 and 1770, coming of age around 1789, may have contributed to the restlessness that caused the French Revolution.

The Agricultural Sector

The vast majority of France's growing eighteenth-century population worked the land. The rich soil in many of its regions and the temperate climate, suitable to a variety of crops, make it even today one of Europe's major agricultural producers.

In the 1700s, some 80 percent of the French population were peasants, members of families whose main occupation was farming. The diversity of France's countryside made for an equally varied agriculture. Some regions, like the Beauce (southwest of Paris), had over the centuries come to specialize in the raising of grain crops for flour for the bread that was the main staple of the French diet. These areas of monoculture developed where the soil was good and the market for their produce large and dependable. Other areas, such as Normandy, had a more diversified kind of farming, raising livestock and producing meat and dairy products as well as grain crops. Diversified agriculture also characterized poor regions such as the Massif Central and Provence, where the soil did not permit the raising of large amounts of grain. Although these regions were less productive than areas like the Beauce, they were often better protected against large swings in production because they were not so dependent on a single crop. Where conditions permitted, grapes were grown to produce the wine grapes for which France was already famous; next to cereal grains, they were the country's most important cash crop.

Eighteenth-century French agriculture depended for the most part on methods that had been used for centuries. In grain-growing areas, the two-field and three-field methods of crop rotation, in which one-half or one-third of the soil was left fallow each year to prevent it from becoming exhausted, continued to be used—often in combination with the open-field system under which individual peasant plots were not fenced in. With peasants under pressure to produce as much grain as possible, pasture land for animals was limited. Since animal dung was the main form of fertilizer available, this in turn restricted the supply of that commodity. This was one of the main limitations on agricultural productivity, which was then considerably lower than it has become in modern times.

Throughout the eighteenth century, innovative landlords and farmers in England were experimenting with new crops and with methods such as crop rotation and the unification and enclosure of previously scattered holdings. Taken together, these changes constituted what historians have labeled the “agricultural revolution.” These new methods raised agricultural productivity and thus permitted rapid population growth and economic expansion. Some French estate owners, royal officials, and intellectuals were aware of the new ideas about farming, but eighteenth-century France was not experiencing an agricultural revolution. “In England we have been making, for forty or fifty years past, a considerable progress in the allotment and inclosure of open fields,” the English agronomist Arthur Young wrote during a visit to France in 1789. “In France, on the contrary, they have not taken the first step.”² Young and many other commentators of the period put this down to the backwardness of the French political system. The French economic theorist François Quesnay blamed “restrictions in the trade of wheat, the form of the imposition of subsidies, the bad use of men and wealth for the manufacture of luxuries, continual wars” for the country’s failure to profit from its natural resources as it should have.³ The British Parliament, dominated by large landowners, systematically favored the process of enclosure, which made it easier for individual landlords to experiment with new farming methods, whereas French laws, which varied tremendously from province to province, generally made it more difficult for landlords to force change on their poorer neighbors.

Nevertheless, total French agricultural production grew enough to at least keep pace with the growth of population and may even have outstripped it, allowing most people

16 *Eighteenth-Century French Society and Economy*

a slightly better diet. The benefits of this slow development of agriculture were, however, shared very unequally among the French population. Since the supply of land was limited and the number of potential workers was growing steadily, landowners enjoyed an advantage over the increasingly numerous peasants who clamored to farm it. Farm wages thus rose more slowly than land rents and crop prices. Large landowners were better placed to adopt new farming methods and to specialize in the production of the cash crops that brought the highest profits. They also tended to keep their landholdings intact from generation to generation, whereas the growth of peasant population meant that their holdings became divided into ever-smaller units. The changes in the rural economy thus tended to sharpen social differences in the countryside, increasing the gap between the prosperous elites who reaped most of the benefits and the swelling number of poor who had to struggle to make a living.

Manufacturing and Commerce

Although agriculture dominated eighteenth-century French life, manufacturing and commerce also had important places in its economy. As in farming, the methods used to make and sell goods in 1750 were traditional ones that had changed only slowly over the previous two or three centuries. Most manufactured products were made by hand in small workshops, which usually consisted of an owner and a handful of assistants—journeymen who had learned their craft but lacked the capital to set up on their own—and apprentices who were being taught the skills of the trade. These small manufacturing enterprises were spread throughout the country; the process of concentration that would later lead to the formation of large urban industrial centers had not yet begun. The limitations of France's transportation system, which made it difficult to export goods over long distances, contributed to the dispersal of manufacturing. France's geography meant that water transport could not link it together as well as England's network of canals, rivers, and coastal trade did. Until the coming of the railroad, France remained divided into relatively isolated regions.

To present-day connoisseurs of antiques, the mention of eighteenth-century French manufactures suggests luxury goods like the fine porcelain made in the royally supported factory at Sèvres. But at the time, as in preindustrial Europe in general, the country's largest industry was the making of textiles. Silk weaving made Lyon the country's second largest city. In other regions, where wool, linen, and cotton cloth were made, the labor force usually consisted of peasants who worked in their own homes in what is known as the "putting-out system." Entrepreneurs brought the raw materials to their workers' homes and collected the finished products from them. Most textile manufacturing was thus dispersed in the countryside, where spinners and weavers were beyond the jurisdiction of the urban guilds whose regulations often limited entrepreneurs' activities. Even relatively large-scale industrial enterprises like iron-making were usually located in rural rather than urban areas.

While French manufacturing grew steadily but not spectacularly over the century, commerce expanded much more rapidly. Foreign trade was the fastest-growing sector, increasing more than 400 percent between 1716 and 1720 and 1787 and 1789. Trade with France's overseas colonies grew at an even faster rate than overseas trade as a whole. Ships from the Atlantic ports took textiles and other manufactured goods from France and black captives from Africa to the West Indies. Sailing most often to Saint Domingue (modern-day Haiti), France's richest

colony, they brought back sugar and coffee grown by slave labor on plantations there. The large plantations where sugarcane was processed into refined sugar were among France's biggest and most lucrative industrial enterprises. The colonial trade created an elite of wealthy Creole slaveowners in the West Indies and a similarly prosperous group of traders and shipowners in the trading ports such as Bordeaux, Nantes, and Saint Malo. Domestic commerce also grew in the course of the eighteenth century, as France took the first steps toward becoming a modern consumer society. The grain trade was the most important branch of domestic commerce: A complex network of wholesale merchants, millers, and bakers carried out the transformation of the country's major crop into its daily bread. But the deficiencies of France's transportation system and the limited purchasing power of most of the population kept the internal market from developing as spectacularly as foreign trade. After 1800, when it became clear that France would never overcome Britain's lead in overseas trade, the slow growth of domestic demand would become a major obstacle to its industrial development.

Predominantly agricultural and definitely "preindustrial," the eighteenth-century French economy was nevertheless not backward by the standards of its day. The consensus of modern historical research is that the rate of French economic growth from 1700 to the time of the French Revolution was comparable to that of England, but that this growth was less concentrated in areas suitable for the adoption of new power-driven machinery and the factory system than England's was. Nor was economic growth smooth and regular. The 1750s and early 1760s were a period of general prosperity for landowners, merchants, and manufacturers. Good harvests kept food prices reasonable for the poor. In the late 1760s, however, a succession of poor harvests sent bread prices soaring. Forced to spend more for food, consumers had less to spend on other goods. This crisis was the prelude to two decades of economic distress in the 1770s and 1780s. The political crisis that led to the French Revolution of 1789 took place against the background of this period of prolonged economic insecurity, which affected the poor most drastically.

Notes

- 1 Remonstrances of the *Parlement de Paris*, 1776, cited in University of Chicago, *History of Western Civilization Readings* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), VII: 91.
- 2 Arthur Young, *Travels in France*, cited in Robert Forster and Elborg Forster, eds., *European Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 109.
- 3 Quesnay, "Grains," in Denis Diderot, ed., *The Encyclopedia: Selections*, Stephen J. Gendzier, trans. and ed. (New York: Harper, 1967), 133.

3 Culture and Thought in Eighteenth-Century France

Just as historians have analyzed the social conflicts of eighteenth-century France and the ups and downs of its economy in the light of the revolutionary crisis of 1789, so

they have studied the thought and culture of the era for clues to the coming upheaval. The Protestant–Catholic quarrel of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had died down, but religious issues still played an important role in French life. Increasingly, however, members of the educated classes adopted a secular outlook, which led them to question the authority of the church and to favor reforms in many areas of French life. This spirit of Enlightenment was not necessarily revolutionary: many aristocrats and high officials accepted the new ideas but believed that they could be implemented through existing institutions. Meanwhile, old traditions of popular belief remained strong and sometimes had the potential to provoke powerful movements of protest. Between the level of high intellectual thought and that of popular belief, a new cultural force emerged: the power of public opinion. The conviction that government and society should follow the dictates of this invisible authority was perhaps the most important cultural root of the changes that occurred in 1789.

Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, French public life was dominated by the Jansenist quarrel, a controversy within the Catholic church that had begun in the 1600s. The Jansenists, Catholics who followed the ideas of the seventeenth-century theologian Cornelius Jansen, sought a sterner, more austere faith than that taught by the official church. In defending their interpretation of Catholicism, they challenged the authority of the religious hierarchy and of the royal government that defended it. Louis XIV had considered them a political threat, and pressured Pope Clement XI to condemn the movement in his bull *Unigenitus* in 1713. Efforts to force the French Jansenists to renounce their convictions continued under Louis XV and led to intense opposition among clergy and laity alike. The movement had many supporters among lawyers and the judges of the royal courts. These defenders argued for the Jansenists' right to follow their conscience, even in opposition to the pope and the royal government. Elaborate theological and legal arguments against arbitrary authority, developed over the years by Jansenist advocates, familiarized the French public with such notions as constitutional rights; and the strong millenarian impulse behind many Jansenist condemnations of the corruption of existing institutions contributed to enthusiasm for reforms.

The French Enlightenment

The Jansenist movement had a broad base of popular support, but by the middle of the century, educated elites were beginning to turn away from religious concerns

altogether. The middle of the eighteenth century was the high point of the intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. The philosophical bases of this movement, which challenged all authority higher than human reason and experience, had been set out by a number of European thinkers at the end of the seventeenth century, such as the French Huguenot exile Pierre Bayle, whose widely circulated *Dictionary* highlighted contradictions in the Bible. In many European countries, such “enlightened” ideas, in watered-down form, penetrated the governing elites without causing great upheavals. In France, however, the intertwined structure of a Catholic church wary of ideological subversion and a royal government wedded to a rigid defense of its theoretically absolute authority made these new ideas unusually controversial. More than elsewhere, the French proponents of the Enlightenment, the self-styled *philosophes*, portrayed themselves as critics of an established order resistant to change.

By 1750, France’s major thinkers were strongly identified with the Enlightenment movement. The best known of the *philosophes*, Voltaire, saw the movement as a continuation and extension of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. One of his most widely read books was a popularization of Isaac Newton’s ideas on physics. Voltaire was best known as a playwright, poet, and pamphleteer whose literary works always carried a clear-cut social or political message. Voltaire’s short novels, the works that appeal most to present-day readers, dealt with burning philosophical issues of the day. *Candide* ridiculed the teachings of the church and *L’Ingénue* used the time-honored device of a noble savage to critique French society.

Along with Voltaire, Baron de Montesquieu was one of the major figures of the French Enlightenment. In a youthful work, the *Persian Letters*, published just after the end of Louis XIV’s reign, he drew a caustic portrait of France’s absolutist monarchy. His masterwork, *The Spirit of the Laws*, published in 1749, brought a rational and dispassionate scientific approach to bear on political issues, analyzing the characteristics of the different forms of government and the social preconditions for their development. Montesquieu’s eloquent description of the virtues of England’s constitutional monarchy, with its balance of powers among the king, the lords, and the commons, had a profound impact in France. Coming from Bordeaux, the port city most involved in France’s colonial trade, Montesquieu was also alert to the ways in which the growth of commerce was changing the economic basis of French society.

By the middle of the century, the ideas incorporated in the writings of Voltaire and Montesquieu had impregnated a generation of lesser writers. Self-proclaimed disciples of Enlightenment dominated France’s cultural life; they formed the milieu of the contributors to the collective project that most completely reflected the spirit of the age, the massive *Encyclopédia* edited by Denis Diderot, whose first volume appeared in 1751. The *Encyclopédia* was intended to sum up and popularize the thought of the Enlightenment and to apply the methods of science and reason to every area of human knowledge. Its heavy emphasis on practical subjects, such as manufacturing processes—whose details were shown in illustrations such as this engraving of a needle-making shop—indicated its authors’ conviction that human happiness depended on secular activities, not spiritual ones. Carefully worded articles on philosophy and theology tried to critique traditional beliefs without bringing down the censors’ wrath, while essays on political subjects suggested that royal authority needed to be tempered by constitutional limits. The fate of the

Encyclopédie summed up the difficult relationship between the Enlightenment and France's established institutions. Officially banned for offending religious dogmas, the project had too much support among royal officials to be suppressed altogether; Diderot's volumes were finally allowed to circulate with false title pages indicating that they had been printed abroad. Another multivolume bestseller of the period, the *Philosophical History of the Two Indies*, first published in 1770, brought the Enlightenment's critical spirit to bear on the topics of overseas colonization and slavery. Contributors to the work, edited by the abbé Raynal, denounced the devastation caused by the European occupation of the Americas and warned that enslaved black population might revolt if their condition was not improved.

During the 1760s, the *philosophes* gradually infiltrated the institutions of official culture, particularly the prestigious royally sponsored *Académie française*. The influence of the *philosophes* also spread through the institution of the salon. At these informal but regular meetings in private homes, writers, artists, musicians, and scientists mingled with well-to-do members of the aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie. Many salons were hosted by women, who were able to participate in this way in the prestige of intellectual and artistic activity although they were excluded from the *académies* and most other aspects of intellectual life. In the last decades of the Old Regime, the supporters of the Enlightenment had become members of an intellectual "establishment," promoting each other to comfortable jobs. Their writings remained critical of many aspects of French society, but they had become social insiders, occupying comfortable positions within the structure they were seeking to reform.

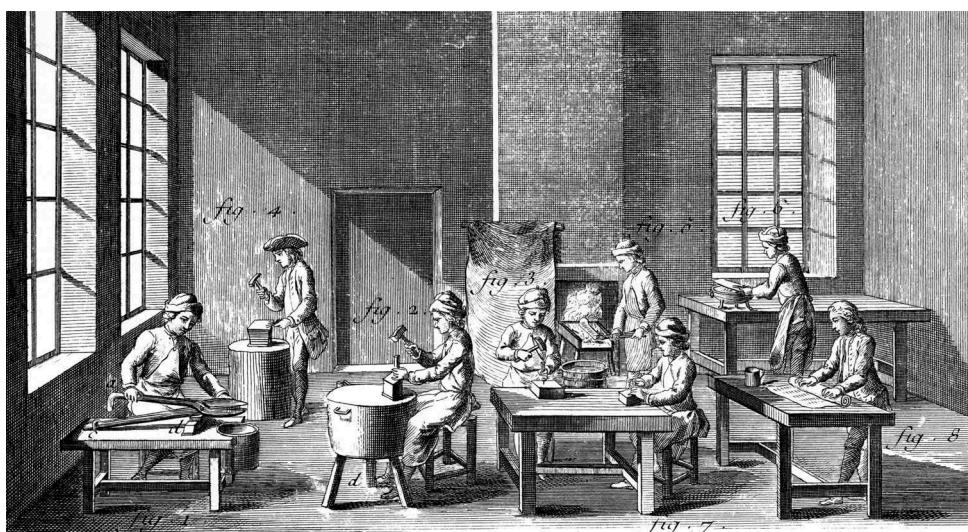


Figure 3.1 An Eighteenth-Century Workshop

An Eighteenth-Century Workshop: The *Encyclopédie*, one of the main products of the French Enlightenment, devoted great attention to manufacturing processes; its authors hoped to promote respect for manual labor and progress in technology. This illustration of a needle-making workshop shows how the division of tasks improved productivity; it also highlights the role of women in the economy. (© The Print Collector/Alamy Stock Photo)

The growing influence of the *philosophes* earned them not only followers but also opponents. Catholic writers responded to the Enlightenment campaign against the church, but this traditionalist defense of revealed religious truth had lost much of its force of conviction in the face of the rationalist assault. The greatest threat to the *philosophes'* intellectual hegemony came not from the church or the proponents of the status quo but from within their own ranks. Enlightenment thought was based on the exaltation of reason as the highest of human faculties. The Catholic and conservative critics had taken the traditional religious viewpoint of human reason as weak and unreliable and had therefore urged respect for authority. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a writer who had originally shared many of the other *philosophes'* convictions, provided a more persuasive critique of Enlightenment rationalism. As he developed his own ideas, Rousseau became increasingly convinced that the rational society his *philosophe* friends hoped to create would not bring about human happiness.

Rousseau: Nature over Reason

Rousseau signaled his break with faith in progress in his controversial *Essay on the Sciences and the Arts*, published in 1751, in which he argued that "civilized" people were becoming ever further removed from true human nature. Rousseau sided with the *philosophes* in rejecting the authority of external institutions, but broke with them by downgrading reason and emphasizing sentiment. In his subsequent works, especially his two best-selling novels, *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1759) and *Emile* (1762), Rousseau glorified feelings and emotions rather than reason as the best guides to living. One of the most controversial portions of *Emile* was a chapter entitled "The Confession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar," in which a country priest put forward an argument for a purely natural religion of the heart.

Rousseau's rejection of Enlightenment rationalism, together with the bitter personal rift that separated him from his former friends among the *philosophes* after 1758, marked a shift in the French intellectual climate. The *philosophes* had made themselves at home in the upper reaches of French society; Rousseau presented himself as an outcast, who sought no sinecures and lived a modest life. Far from making him a marginal figure, this rejection of the intellectual establishment made Rousseau the center of a widespread cult. Women especially responded to the appeal to sentiment in his works. Rousseau's popularity with women readers is surprising, because he often argued that women distracted men from the serious issues of public life. In his view, women's proper role was to raise children and take care of their homes; he railed against "unnatural" women who became actresses or otherwise interacted publicly with men. Nevertheless, Rousseau became a rallying point for all those who found both French institutions and Enlightenment culture too artificial and too elitist. In the same year that he published *Emile*, Rousseau also set forth his ideas about politics in a book entitled *The Social Contract*. Not widely read until after the French Revolution of 1789, Rousseau's work was nevertheless the most important analysis of the origins of political authority written in the eighteenth century. Unlike Montesquieu's empirical inquiry into the workings of existing institutions, Rousseau's book sought to analyze the prerequisites for a legitimate political system. He argued that all men had equal rights and that the citizens' consent was the only just base for governmental authority; this democratic ideology undercut all existing institutions. At the same time, however,

Rousseau envisioned a utopia in which all members would put aside their private interests for the common good; those who refused to do so would be excluded from the community. Rousseau himself was cautious about the practical implications of his own political ideas; he doubted the possibility of a successful effort to remodel Europe's societies, corrupted by centuries of bad institutions. Once the French Revolution began, however, his ideas were cited both to justify the creation of a more egalitarian society and to defend repressive measures against those who opposed the new government.

The Eighteenth-Century Public

It is difficult to measure how widely either Enlightenment values or Rousseau's pre-Romanticism penetrated the bulk of French society. It is certainly true that the French population was becoming increasingly literate. The Maggiolo survey, a pioneering study carried out in the late nineteenth century, showed that the percentage of men sufficiently educated to sign their names to their parish's marriage register rose from 29 percent in 1686 to 1690 to 47 percent in 1786 to 1790, while the figures for women climbed from 14 percent to 27 percent. Writers and publishers eagerly served this growing market. The number of newspapers and magazines published in France, rose from only 19 in the decade of the 1740s to 73 in the 1780s, and the number of books published also increased greatly. Books and magazines remained fairly expensive and therefore out of the reach of most of the lower classes, but the multiplication of reading rooms gave some people who could not afford to purchase their own books access to a wide variety of reading material at a modest price. An increasing number of theaters and concert halls brought a broader cultural diet to the populations of France's cities.

A growing network of cultural institutions also favored the circulation of new ideas. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, *académies* modeled after the institutions set up in Paris during the previous century were established in the major cities of the provinces. Like their more prestigious Parisian counterparts, they recruited a mixed membership of aristocrats, clergy, and wealthy members of the bourgeoisie. At their public sessions, audiences listened to reports about research into local history and natural phenomena and applauded the productions of local poets and dramatists. Essay contests sponsored by academies offered members of the public the opportunity to express their own ideas about public issues. Rousseau was only the most famous of many authors who launched their careers by winning one of these competitions.

More widespread than the provincial *académies* were the Masonic lodges that spread throughout France after 1750. Freemasonry was introduced into France from England in the 1720s. The Masonic lodges brought together members of all classes who shared a common devotion to virtue and fraternity. The secrecy of their proceedings was an additional lure for potential members. Eighteenth-century French lodges seem to have spent most of their time enacting elaborate rituals, listening to edifying speeches, and enjoying lavish banquets; the myth that the Masons were controlled by a clique determined to propagate subversive ideas and bring about the overthrow of the monarchy has no factual basis. But the lodges were receptive to Enlightenment ideas about religious toleration and, as participatory organizations—whose members were supposed to treat each other equally without regard to their social status—they fostered ideas about self-government and equality that were at odds with the official values of

the Old Regime. By the 1780s, the Masonic movement counted more than 35,000 adherents in France.

The growing reading public and the network of groups of various kinds that met to discuss ideas conveyed in books and periodicals provided the social basis for the rise of a new phenomenon in French society, the force of public opinion. The concept of a “public opinion” based on the exchange of views among private individuals was a new one in the eighteenth century; the term only became common around 1750. The “public” whose opinion increasingly replaced God and the king as the source of authority in eighteenth-century discussions contrasted sharply with all the clearly identifiable social groupings in eighteenth-century France. Membership in the public was open to anyone with a modicum of wealth, leisure, and education, including women, who formed most of the audience for the period’s novels, and members of the public were all equal. These private individuals whose collective judgment became the standard of authority claimed no overt political role, but it was inevitable that they would comment on governmental actions as well as on books, plays, and works of art. “Ministers have become the most carefully observed actors on the stage of the great world, and their performance is the most severely judged,” the former controller-general Jacques Necker observed in 1785.¹ He and other leading political figures increasingly saw the need to have the intangible force of public opinion on their side if they were to govern effectively.

Although the importance of the public was increasingly acknowledged as the century wore on, its composition remained a matter of dispute. The public, with access to the printed writings of the *philosophes* and of Rousseau, was not identical with the people, the mass of the population. Lacking education and information, the common people could not participate in the process of public discussion that constituted public opinion. Exactly where the social frontier that divided “public” from “people” lay was uncertain, but educated French men and women were certain that the culture they participated in was not that of the mass of the peasantry and the urban lower classes.

Popular Culture

The culture of the ordinary people remained largely oral. There was some printed literature aimed at this audience, but it was far removed from the texts that circulated among the educated. The small, cheap, badly printed paper-bound volumes of the *Bibliothèque bleue*, so named because of their blue paper covers, were the basis of popular print culture. They included simplified versions of old folk tales, religious tracts, how-to books, and almanacs that forecast the weather, provided a short summary of the major events of the year just past, and offered practical advice to peasant farmers. Over the course of the century, the titles of the *Bibliothèque bleue* did show some modest evolution: The proportion of traditional works of piety declined somewhat, while the number of practical utilitarian titles rose. But the overall pattern was one of stability, and there was little sign of overt influence from the Enlightenment or other intellectual currents of the time.

Compared to the culture of France’s elites, popular culture remained more influenced by religion and by traditions that the upper classes were quick to dismiss as “superstitions.” Ironically, church authorities and antireligious Enlightenment writers sometimes found themselves united in condemning popular beliefs, such as the widespread

24 *Culture and Thought in 18th-Century France*

conviction among peasants that the ringing of church bells could ward off destructive hailstorms, a practice officially rejected by the clergy on the grounds that it implied a human ability to control God's will. Peasants clung to their beliefs, however, because they provided some sense of control over the dangerous forces of nature. For similar reasons, they often preferred folk healers who prescribed herbs and spells to educated doctors who confessed themselves helpless in the face of most diseases.

The beliefs of the common people in the eighteenth century reflected a very different world of experience from the culture of France's educated urban elites. The two worlds were not completely separated, however. For all their sophistication, even France's most privileged inhabitants still lived in a world of uncontrollable natural forces. Learned doctors were just as unable to save Louis XV from a fatal case of smallpox in 1774 as they were to treat the maladies of the poor. Both rich and poor enjoyed the rough-and-tumble performances in Paris's boulevard theaters. Broadsheets and newspaper reports about the "beast of Gévaudan," a creature blamed for a number of bloody attacks in a remote region of southern France during the 1760s, terrified all sectors of the population and made the animal one of the country's first national celebrities. (In reality, the deaths were probably caused by a pack of wolves, not by a single "monster.") Conversely, the poor were not totally immune to the currents of "enlightened" thought. A massive quantitative study of the religious attitudes expressed in wills drawn up in the south-eastern region of Provence over the course of the eighteenth century has shown a clear drop in legacies left for strictly religious purposes among members of the lower classes as well as the elites. Even some artisans and peasants were thus abandoning traditional religious practices in the decades before the Revolution.

Note

- 1 Jacques Necker, *De l'Administration des Finances de la France* (n.p., 1785), 1: 6.

4 A Government under Challenge

At the beginning of the 1700s, France's system of absolute monarchy had been a model for much of Europe. By the last decades of the century, however, much of the French population no longer accepted its principles. Changes in society and culture contributed to the undermining of the absolutist system, but so did the succession of political crises that began around 1750. These confrontations were signs of the first efforts to create political institutions adapted to the modern, secular world, and their outcome strongly influenced the direction of French life during and after the Revolution.

The Absolutist System and Its Weaknesses

The structure of the French government in 1750 was complex. Parts of it had begun to resemble a modern, centralized bureaucracy; indeed, the word *bureaucratie*, meaning a government run by government employees accused of tying up every decision in unnecessary paperwork, appeared for the first time in France in the 1780s. But this rational structure coexisted with a welter of other institutions that were rooted in France's long history and that frequently paralyzed the workings of the more centralized parts of the governing apparatus.

The most obvious fact about France's system of government in the eighteenth century was that it was monarchical. Like so many other aspects of the system, the monarchy was at once ancient and modern. France's eighteenth-century kings, descendants of the Bourbon family that had come to the throne with Henry IV in 1589, continued a tradition whose origins went back to the fifth century of the modern era. But the eighteenth-century monarchy was far different from that of earlier epochs. In the Middle Ages, the king of France had been a feudal lord, whose vassals pledged him loyalty in return for the right to govern their own fiefs or domains. The kings of the Renaissance and especially those of the seventeenth century had transformed the monarchy into something very different: a so-called absolute monarchy, in which the king claimed to hold full sovereign powers over all his subjects and in which he was no longer bound by the reciprocal obligations of feudal society. Unlike the king of England, who needed the approval of Parliament to enact laws and collect taxes, the French king did not share his legislative power with any other institution. He commanded the army and navy and the entire machinery of governmental administration, and he was also the supreme judge, to whom verdicts in any other court could be appealed.

The process by which the absolutist monarchical state had been built up culminated in the long reign of Louis XIV, who succeeded to the throne in 1643 at the age of five, and personally ran the government from the death of his advisor, Cardinal Mazarin, in

26 A Government under Challenge

1661 until his own death in 1715. This determined and hard-working ruler came close to making government practice correspond to absolutist theory, as it had been articulated by earlier politicians such as the great minister of the early seventeenth century, Cardinal Richelieu. Louis XIV tamed the independent-minded nobility, integrating them into his system of government and encouraging ambitious aristocrats to spend their time bidding for favors at his court rather than asserting their independence in the provinces. Harsh repression ended the long series of seventeenth-century peasant revolts after 1675, and the expulsion of the Protestants in 1685 ended religious conflicts in the kingdom. Unlike his predecessors, Louis XIV did not rely on a single powerful minister: His ministers, although they were often talented men, were definitely his subordinates. Through them, he controlled a more efficient governing machine than his predecessors. Louis XIV could truthfully have said—although he probably didn’t—the words often attributed to him: “L’état, c’est moi (I am the state).”

The “Sun King” not only consolidated all political power in his own hands; he also involved the monarchy in almost every area of French life. Through his power to appoint bishops and the heads of monasteries and convents, he controlled the church. The name of Louis XIV’s finance minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, came to stand for a policy of active government involvement in economic affairs. Colbert tried to promote French domestic industries and diminish the kingdom’s reliance on imports; he organized companies of merchants in a largely unsuccessful effort to promote overseas trade. A complex system of regulation, meant to maintain quality and prevent cutthroat competition, restricted entrepreneurial initiative. The Colbertist tradition of government involvement in economic affairs left a permanent mark on French life. So did the tradition of governmental involvement in cultural and intellectual life, which also reached a high point under Louis XIV. In 1635, Cardinal Richelieu created the *Académie française*. Its 40 members, supposedly the greatest writers in the country, received royal pensions and in return were expected to produce works glorifying the monarchy and to regulate the proper use of the French language. In the 1660s, Louis XIV added new *académies* devoted to history and to the natural sciences. Theater, opera, ballet, and music all depended on the court for patronage.

In the provinces, the keystone of Louis XIV’s governing system was the appointment of royal representatives, the *intendants*, to oversee local administration. The *intendants*, who served at the king’s pleasure, gave the monarch real authority over his realm, unlike the noble *gouverneurs* of earlier times, who could not be removed from office and frequently refused to carry out the king’s orders. But the *gouverneurs* remained in existence, although without real functions, until the coming of the Revolution. Louis XIV’s hesitancy to abolish such offices reflected his instinctive conservatism: he did not abolish older institutions, but simply created new ones alongside them.

It was not only respect for tradition that made it hard for French rulers to simplify the structure of their government. They were also trapped by the fact that most government positions were actually owned by the families whose members occupied them, a system known as “venality of offices.” Kings resorted to this system because the sale of offices brought them revenue, and the purchasers were supposedly responsible for carrying out at their own expense functions that would otherwise have had to be done by paid officials. But the owners of an office were largely independent of the king and his ministers: They could not be dismissed or disciplined for failing to perform their functions. The king could not abolish venal offices unless he reimbursed their holders. The system of venal office holding thus limited the king’s control of his own

government. Despite this obstacle, Louis XIV succeeded in making the French monarchy reasonably effective. But his success depended on his unique combination of personal energy and force of will; he drove himself to the brink of exhaustion overseeing every detail of the running of the government and keeping his officials in line. His eighteenth-century successors—Louis XV, who reigned from 1715 to 1774, and Louis XVI, who ruled from 1774 until the Revolution abolished the monarchy in 1792—lacked their ancestor's single-minded dedication to the "profession of king." Under their rule, the shortcomings of France's supposedly absolutist monarchy became glaringly obvious.

The weakness of France's royal bureaucracy was most evident in the area of tax collection. Rather than employing officials appointed by and responsible to the king to collect its revenues, the monarchy sold the right to collect many taxes to private entrepreneurs, often nobles who turned the actual work over to lesser employees. These tax farmers had every incentive to collect as much money as possible from the king's subjects, but to forward as little as possible to Versailles. Throughout the eighteenth century, successive finance ministers recognized the structural weaknesses of the tax collection system, but they were unable to make major changes in it. The tax farmers jealously guarded the rights they had purchased from the government, and the crown lacked the resources to do without them. As a result, the royal government was chronically short of money and had to rely on borrowing to cover its needs. Knowing how uncertain the French monarchy's tax revenues were, lenders demanded much higher rates of interest than those paid by countries with more efficient financial systems, like Britain.

One reason France's eighteenth-century ministers could not reform the tax system was because of opposition from political institutions that had never been entirely subordinated to the crown. Louis XIV had successfully intimidated these groups by the force of his personality, but they reasserted themselves under his successors. In a number of regions, such as Brittany and Languedoc, provincial Estates continued to meet periodically, bargaining with the royal government about taxes and jealously guarding their region's traditional laws and privileges. The Catholic Church, immune to taxation and reinforced by a governing system of its own, also had considerable autonomy. Most importantly, the king's own law courts—especially the 13 *parlements* that served as appeals courts for France's different provinces, and several other specialized courts that dealt with taxes and finances—formed a permanent obstacle to absolutist rule. The judges, wealthy nobles whose offices were their own property, asserted their right to scrutinize the king's edicts and the actions of his officials to ensure that they conformed to the law. Through their right of sending the king remonstrances or objections, they could suspend the enforcement of new laws.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, the pretensions of the *parlements* had become the central issue in French politics. The judges of the *parlements*, often sympathetic to the Jansenists, argued that their ability to restrain the actions of the king's officials was critical if France was to be a monarchy based on laws, rather than an arbitrary despotism. In a series of confrontations with the crown from 1750 onward, the *parlements* and their defenders argued that the judges were the natural defenders of the rights of the king's subjects, and they familiarized those subjects with ideas of the rule of law and the desirability of a balance of powers. As long as the *parlements* remained untamed, France's supposedly absolutist system of government was in fact limited in a very real way.

The Breakdown of Absolutism, 1750 to 1774

The shortcomings of France's disorganized monarchical system became increasingly apparent in the decades after 1750, as the challenges facing the government became more acute. Major wars—the War of the Austrian Succession from 1740 to 1748 and the Seven Years' War between 1756 and 1763—forced the ministers to raise more money. As they tried to do so, the king's ministers found themselves hamstrung at every turn by the inefficient workings of a system based on venal officeholders and restricted by the privileges of the country's innumerable corporate groups. *Parlement* magistrates, lesser officeholders, and ordinary subjects, on the other hand, perceived the government not as too weak but as too strong. In the absence of any representative institutions through which the king's subjects could participate in lawmaking, government policy was set by the monarch's small group of advisors, made up of the ministers and the king's favorites. To all those outside the inner circles of government, the monarchy seemed perpetually in danger of degenerating into what the polemicists of the period labeled a "ministerial despotism," in which a few royally appointed officials would wield arbitrary power. Critics also denounced the "nocturnal administration" of women close to the king—Louis XV's mistresses Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry, and later Louis XVI's queen Marie-Antoinette—whose sexual relations with the monarch supposedly gave them undue political influence.

French politics in the period from 1750 to 1789 was dominated by a series of controversies generated by successive ministers' efforts to make the government more effective. These controversies failed to produce any major change in the monarchy's structure, but they did have a very important result: They gave the king's subjects an education in politics. Partisans and opponents of reform both used a variety of media to appeal to the new public that had matured by the mid-century; increasingly, they propagated the idea that the public's approval should be the basis of political authority. Rather than being universally accepted as part of the natural order of things, France's institutions were seen by 1789 as open to criticism. Few educated French men and women at the end of the eighteenth century still saw the king as a sacred figure, or the institutions of the monarchy as inherently legitimate.

Among the issues that led to constitutional disputes after 1750, the most persistent was the question of taxation. The issue became pressing at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession in 1748. Faced with debts accumulated during the war, Machault d'Arnouville, the controller-general (the minister responsible for royal finances), sought to introduce a new tax, the *vingtième*, to be levied on all owners of property, regardless of their social status. This was an attack on the system of privilege on which French society was based, and Machault's plan generated strong resistance. The outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756 allowed the government to impose some new taxes but, after it ended, difficulties arose again. During the 1760s, Louis XV's ministers shifted their strategy to one of reforming the French economy, hoping that increased prosperity would generate more revenue for the government. In 1763 and 1764, a set of edicts abolished traditional controls on the grain trade, the most important branch of French commerce. Influenced by the ideas of the Physiocrats, a group of economic theorists who advocated less regulation and more reliance on market forces, the ministry took the risk of letting grain and bread prices rise to encourage landowners to invest in increased production. The members of the

parlements (themselves often large landowners) did not initially resist these measures, but when grain prices began to rise sharply in the second half of the 1760s as a result of several years of bad harvests, the judges began to oppose royal policy. They cast themselves as defenders of the poor and denounced a ministerial “famine plot” to profit from the public’s misery.

Struggle over Religious Issues

By this time, the government and the *parlements* were also in conflict over a second set of equally explosive issues growing out the Jansenist quarrel. In 1750, the archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont, began an unprecedentedly harsh campaign to stamp out the Jansenists by denying them church sacraments unless they renounced their beliefs. Jansenist sympathizers immediately appealed the archbishop’s directives to the *Parlement* of Paris, which saw an opportunity to assert its right to intervene in church-state matters.

This “refusal of sacraments” controversy dragged on for several years and led to a steady radicalization on both sides. Advocates of the *parlements* used the conflict as an opportunity to claim that the judges were the true defenders of French liberty, and that the different *parlements* scattered around the country were in fact one body, representing the French nation. Propagandists loyal to the king’s ministers responded that this would amount to converting France into a republic of judges. Louis XV attempted unsuccessfully to end the controversy by decreeing a compromise and ordering all parties to observe an “edict of silence,” which forbade further discussion of the issues raised by the dispute. When an unemployed domestic servant named Robert Damiens stabbed the king in 1757, each side claimed that he had been inspired by the other’s religious doctrines.

The issue of whether the *parlements* had a right to challenge royal policies affecting the church heated up again in 1762, when the judges began a concerted campaign against the Jesuit religious order. The Jesuits, the Jansenists’ most determined opponents, were a secretive organization, international in scope and sworn to loyalty to the pope. This conflicted with the long-standing French tradition of Gallicanism, the doctrine that required that the French Catholic church demonstrate its obedience to the authority of the king. The *parlements* were able to demand a ban on the Jesuits in the name of upholding royal authority; the king and his ministers, needing *parlement* cooperation to pay for the Seven Years’ War, were unable to resist. In 1764, Louis XV signed an edict expelling the Jesuit order from France. The power and prestige of the *parlements* naturally increased.

The Maupeou Coup

Parlement and ministerial authority soon clashed again. As a result of their earlier conflicts, the *parlement* of Brittany had become embroiled with the royal governor of the province, the Duc d’Aiguillon. The *parlement* judges brought charges against him for abusing his authority and launched a trial that threatened to result in the punishment of a high royal official. The government was determined to block the proceedings. In June 1770, Louis XV issued an edict quashing d’Aiguillon’s trial. The judges’ supporters promptly inundated the country with denunciations of the king’s arbitrary action. In this situation, Louis XV finally listened to advisors, led by Chancellor René Maupeou, the minister of justice, who told him that royal authority could only be maintained by a showdown with the *parlements*. In

December 1770, Maupeou staged a “coup” against them, issuing edicts drastically curtailing their privileges. The majority of *parlement* judges refused to accept the Maupeou decrees. Maupeou consequently declared them dismissed from their jobs and appointed new men to replace them; the protesting judges were exiled to remote districts in the provinces. Maupeou’s colleague, the finance minister, the abbé Terray, lightened the government’s debt burden by declaring partial bankruptcy, but the supporters of the ousted judges mounted a massive propaganda campaign against their “despotic” policies. The fact that the king’s unpopular mistress Madame du Barry supported Maupeou also fueled the campaign against him. When Louis XV died unexpectedly in 1774, Maupeou and Terray were dismissed and their effort to strengthen the government ended. The politics of the period exhibited many features that have characterized French national life ever since, particularly the tendency for confrontations to take on a dramatic ideological tone and for all parties to reject any idea of compromise. The final two-and-a-half decades of Louis XV’s reign were thus a crucial period in the formation of modern France’s political culture.

The Reign of Louis XVI, 1774 to 1787

For a few years after the death of Louis XV, the temperature of French politics seemed to cool down. The old king’s young and inexperienced grandson, Louis XVI, had been impressed by the unpopularity of measures against the *parlements*. The new monarch’s advisors persuaded him to dismiss Maupeou and his allies, and to recall the judges of the old *parlements* who had been exiled in 1771. Somewhat chastened by their experience, the judges were less combative than they had been in the late 1760s, but the lesson to the monarchy was nevertheless clear. Royal ministers could expect strong resistance to any measures that involved a fundamental restructuring of France’s governmental system.

Turgot and Necker

Even though Louis XVI had begun his reign by retreating from his predecessor’s major reform initiative, his ministers were still aware of the government’s problems. But for the next decade, Maupeou’s successors tried to make changes without risking a direct confrontation with the *parlements*. Among Louis XVI’s first ministers, the leading figure was Jacques Turgot, an experienced administrator whose ideas were close to those of the Physiocrats. Turgot was determined to revive the liberal economic program first enacted in the early 1760s. In 1775, he once again abolished the restrictions on the grain trade, and in early 1776 he issued a set of edicts intended to clear the way for the transformation of France’s entire economy. The most important of these was a law abolishing all the traditional guilds and economic corporations. Had it succeeded, the French economy would have been organized on the basis of virtually unregulated free enterprise. Turgot and his supporters hoped that this would encourage entrepreneurial initiative, promote economic growth, and ultimately enrich the government’s coffers.

The *Parlement* of Paris provided a mouthpiece for the privileged groups who opposed the abolition of the guilds and Turgot’s other innovations. The liberalization of the grain trade had never been popular with the lower classes in the cities who had to buy bread, and they responded to Turgot’s measures with rioting in the

“grain war” of May 1775. This was the most serious wave of popular protest in the decades before the Revolution of 1789. By June of 1776, the coalition of resistance to Turgot had become so powerful that Louis XVI decided to dismiss him. Another serious effort at reform under governmental sponsorship, this one explicitly justified in the rationalist and secular language of the French Enlightenment, had been abandoned.

A similar fate awaited Turgot’s successor, Jacques Necker. His appointment as controller-general in 1777 was in itself an innovation: Necker, a successful banker and a Protestant, was the first commoner to hold such an elevated post. As controller-general, he sought to carry out a variety of piecemeal reforms to reduce expenses, make tax collection more efficient, and decentralize authority by creating provincial assemblies with limited powers in several French provinces. In 1781, he caused a sensation by publishing for the first time a summary of the French government’s annual revenue and expenses, thereby inviting the public to participate in the debate on France’s finances. But even these modest efforts involved conflicts with powerful interests, such as the officeholders whose lucrative positions Necker wanted to abolish. In May 1781, he too lost his ministerial post, and the reforms he had tried to introduce were repealed, like those of Maupeou and Turgot.

The institutional reforms attempted by Maupeou, Turgot, and Necker show that the top officials of France’s royal government were acutely aware of the system’s many weaknesses long before the crisis of 1789. The failure of all three men’s efforts suggests, however, that the absolute monarchy ultimately lacked the ability to reform itself. Its many internal conflicts, coupled with the lack of any real mechanism for associating an increasingly vocal public with the reform process, made it exceedingly difficult to obtain a consensus for real change. Yet the imperatives of France’s role in the European state system made reform ever more necessary.

France and the European State System

Ironically, it was a major foreign policy success in the early years of Louis XVI’s reign that drove the French monarchy into its final crisis. The growth of the French absolute monarchy in the 1600s had coincided with France’s rise to the status of the leading power in continental Europe. Success in warfare and the acquisition of new territories had become part of what each French monarch was expected to achieve. In this, as in so many other ways, Louis XIV had left his successors a hard example to match. The many long conflicts of his reign—particularly the war of the League of Augsburg (1688–1697) and its continuation, the war of the Spanish Succession (1701–1713)—had been costly and only partly successful. But in both wars it had taken a coalition of almost all the other European powers to equal France’s might. At their close, Louis XIV had established France’s border firmly on the Rhine through the annexation of the crucial province of Alsace, and gained new territory along France’s northern and southern frontiers. During Louis XIV’s reign, France also expanded its presence in the non-European world, replacing Spain and the Netherlands as England’s main rival for trade and influence in North America, the Caribbean, and India.

For a generation after the great wars of Louis XIV’s reign, France enjoyed relative peace. The cautious Cardinal Fleury, Louis XV’s principal minister until his death in 1743, avoided risky conflicts. Shortly before Fleury died in 1743, Prussian king Frederic II, “the Great,” inaugurated a new series of European wars with his attack on Austria

in 1740. The resulting war of the Austrian Succession followed the pattern of Louis XIV's wars: France, allied with Prussia, fought against Austria and England. Its conclusion, in 1748, left the major issues between France and England, particularly the question of who would dominate North America, undecided. On the continent, France's Prussian ally made a major gain, acquiring the valuable province of Silesia, while Louis XV's government obtained nothing comparable. Deprived of Fleury's capable guidance, Louis XV took a more active but not necessarily well-thought-out role in shaping French foreign policy. With renewed conflict with England virtually inevitable, the stage was set for a startling reversal of alliances.

France versus England in North America, India, and the Caribbean

In 1754, a series of incidents in North America ignited a new round of Anglo-French fighting, known in the United States as the French and Indian War. Britain cast about for potential continental allies; Prussia, fearful of an Austrian effort to recapture Silesia, eagerly responded. Once Britain and Prussia had concluded a treaty, Austria and France, traditional enemies, were driven together. Their formal alliance, signed on May 1, 1756, completed the "diplomatic revolution" that reversed three-quarters of a century of European power politics. Unfortunately for the architects of France's new policy, the Seven Years' War that began with Prussia's preemptive invasion of Saxony in August 1756 quickly turned into a costly disaster.

Often called "the first world war," the Seven Years' War pitted French forces against the British on the seas, in distant North America, and on the Indian subcontinent. At the same time, they had to fight Frederic the Great's armies in Germany. Frederic, the greatest military commander of his day, inflicted a painful defeat on the French at Rossbach in 1757. In North America, the British captured all of French Canada in 1760, and seized key French colonies in the Caribbean. The British also gained control of the French possessions in India. Whereas wars had traditionally been regarded as the king's private affair, the French government tried to encourage patriotic enthusiasm for this conflict, thereby beginning a process that would lead to the bellicose nationalism of the revolutionary era. But this effort was only partly successful. The *philosophes*, many of them admirers of Prussia's Frederic the Great, openly favored France's enemies, and many army officers were unhappy about fighting in alliance with their traditional Austrian enemies. The Seven Years' War was also the costliest conflict France had engaged in for half a century. The need to pay back the loans taken out during the war was one of the main causes of the French monarchy's desperate financial crisis in the last decades of the Old Regime.

The Treaty of Paris, signed in February 1763, set the seal on a defeat that cost the French monarchy dearly in money and prestige. France regained the vital sugar islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, but only at the cost of abandoning all its territorial claims in North America and India. As a result of this treaty, the French province of Québec, the largest overseas settlement founded by French immigrants and even today a bastion of French language and culture, came under British rule. Louis XV's energetic foreign minister, the Duc de Choiseul (who had guided policy since 1758), set in motion military reforms that eventually benefited the armies of the revolutionary period, but he lost his post in 1770 before the opportunity to take revenge on the British arose. With its government preoccupied with the domestic repercussions of the Maupeou "coup" after 1770, France stood by while Prussia, Austria, and Russia carved

out gains for themselves in the First Partition of Poland (1772–1774). Since Poland had traditionally been one of France's allies, this was another blow to France's standing among the Great Powers.

Louis XVI, the young monarch who succeeded to the throne in 1774, had neither the thirst for glory that had driven his ancestor, Louis XIV, nor the appetite for diplomatic intrigue of Louis XV. To strengthen the French alliance with Austria, in 1770 he had been married to a princess of that country's Habsburg dynasty, Marie-Antoinette; the Austrian court expected her to lobby for policies favorable to them. The foreign minister Louis XVI appointed, the Count de Vergennes, was a cautious career diplomat with limited ambitions who supported the Austrian alliance. But after 1775, when Britain became embroiled in a war with its rebellious colonists in North America, Vergennes decided that the opportunity to pay the British back for their successes in the Seven Years' War by supporting the Americans was too good to resist. By 1778, France was once again at war with its traditional enemy. Through this decision, made in accordance with the monarchy's customary foreign policy, Vergennes—one of the most conservative of Old Regime officials—helped bring about two revolutions, the American and the French.

The American conflict did not spread to the European continent. The French were able to concentrate on a naval campaign against Britain, supplemented by the dispatch of a small expeditionary force to aid the American rebels. Admiral de Grasse's ships were crucial in cutting off General Cornwallis's forces and compelling their surrender to the American army at Yorktown in 1781. But the peace treaty that ended the war in 1783 gave France little more than prestige; hopes that the newly independent United States would become a major market for French goods were never fulfilled. Meanwhile, the war—which the controller-general Necker had financed by extensive borrowing rather than risking controversial tax increases—drove the French government further into debt. Britain, with its more robust economy and system of credit, quickly recovered from its defeat. The French monarchy's single foreign-policy success during the final decades of the Old Regime thus produced no tangible benefits.

By the mid-1780s, even the conservative Vergennes had come to recognize that France's creaky domestic institutions were crippling its ability to sustain the role of a great power. The French monarchy was so short of money that it had to stand by helplessly while its rivals Britain and Prussia intervened against French allies in the Dutch Republic in 1787. The revolutionary and Napoleonic era would show that France had the resources to sustain a far more ambitious foreign policy, if these resources were used effectively. Before that was possible, however, barriers to domestic reform had to be broken down.

5 Collapse of the Old Monarchy

France in the mid-1780s presents the historian with a puzzle. With the benefit of hindsight, we know that the country was on the brink of a revolutionary crisis. But it is not so simple to decide which of the many strains and tensions in prerevolutionary French society led to this explosion. Demographic expansion and economic change had led to pressure on the land and a widening gap between rich and poor, but living conditions for most of the population were better by the 1780s than they had been at the death of Louis XIV in 1715. Bourgeois resentments against the special privileges of the nobles were strong, but many bourgeois still wanted to gain noble status. New cultural and intellectual values that undermined faith in traditional institutions ranging from the church to the guilds had spread, even among some of the lower classes, but the government itself had adopted some of these enlightened attitudes. Since 1750, France's political system had teetered from crisis to crisis, but it had survived more than three decades of such episodes without reaching the point of breakdown. What happened in 1789 was different, because the crisis that broke out that year brought all the social, cultural, economic, and political conflicts of eighteenth-century France to a head simultaneously.

If the long-term causes of the French Revolution remain difficult to disentangle, its immediate origins are easy to trace. In August 1786, the controller-general, Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, reported to Louis XVI that the royal government was on the brink of insolvency. The immediate problem was the need to repay loans floated to pay the cost of France's participation in the American War of Independence; the fiscal crisis was thus directly linked to the effort to maintain France's role as a world power. But Calonne now advised Louis XVI that "the only way to bring real order into the finances is to revitalize the entire state by reforming all that is defective in its constitution."¹ His predecessors' failures had convinced Calonne that he could not accomplish his aims through the normal institutions of the monarchy. And so he took the first step that was to lead to a revolution: he persuaded the king to convocate an "Assembly of Notables" to discuss fundamental changes in the structure of French government.

By convening an assembly of leading noblemen, clergy, and high officials to examine his reform proposals, Calonne believed that he could enlist the force of public opinion in favor of his most important proposals and outflank the *parlements'* resistance to change. He wanted a new land tax to be levied on all property owners—nobles, clergy, and commoners—and the establishment of consultative assemblies in all of France's provinces. The land tax implied the breaking down of deep-rooted distinctions between social classes and corporate groups; the provincial assemblies suggested an abandonment

of the fundamental principle of absolutism that authority should flow from the top down. But the 142 delegates who arrived at Versailles in January 1787 reacted to Calonne's projects with suspicion, demanding a precise accounting of revenue and expenditures to demonstrate the necessity for new taxes.

By April 1787, it was clear that Calonne's gamble had failed. Louis XVI replaced him with one of his chief critics among the notables, the archbishop of Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne. Brienne sought to have the *parlements* approve modified versions of Calonne's proposals, but without success. Compromise with the *parlements* having failed, Brienne and his fellow ministers decided to adopt a policy of confrontation similar to Maupeou's "coup" of 1770. On May 8, 1788, they promulgated a set of edicts that abolished the *parlements*, replacing them with a single high court for the whole country. They accompanied this radical measure with other reforms designed to make the elimination of the *parlements* more palatable, such as the abolition of fees that litigants had to pay judges to have their cases heard. But these reforms did little to soften the shock of their actions, which revived the fear of an all-powerful "ministerial despotism" that had been raised earlier by Maupeou's measures.

From Failed Reforms to Revolutionary Crisis

Although the issues raised by the 1788 reforms were similar to those posed in 1770, the outcome of this crisis was very different. Nearly two decades of unsuccessful reform efforts from above, and the unprecedented severity of the financial crisis, had dangerously eroded the government's authority. The successful creation of a republic based on popular sovereignty in the United States provided a thought-provoking new political model whose virtues the American ambassador to France, Thomas Jefferson, advertised among his circle of intellectual and political friends. Furthermore, the political crisis was compounded by other problems. For nearly two decades, the French economy had struggled. The government's attempt to stimulate trade through a treaty with England in 1786 hurt many manufacturers, who could not compete with cheaper products made in that country's new mechanized factories. Nature added to the monarchy's woes: in the summer of 1788, a devastating hailstorm damaged grain crops in much of northern France, provoking a steep rise in bread prices that continued until the following summer and that inspired widespread popular unrest.

In this tense context, the attempt to abolish the *parlements* opened a debate that went beyond the issues of taxes and court reform and raised the question of who had the sovereign power to make fundamental laws for the kingdom. Opponents of Brienne's measures maintained that this power could be exercised only by the nation itself, not by the king and his ministers. Inspired by the examples of England and the United States, these protesters demanded a form of representative assembly for France. French historical tradition offered an example of such a body: the Estates-General, a body of deputies chosen from the three traditional Estates with the power to present grievances to the king and offer advice on taxes and laws. France's absolute monarchs, reluctant to share their power, had not summoned a meeting of the Estates-General since 1614.

As resistance to the abolition of the *parlements* and demands for a representative assembly mounted, the king and his ministers finally saw no alternative to convening the Estates-General. Royal authority was breaking down in several provinces,

notably in Dauphiné—where an unauthorized assembly had met to plan reestablishment of the province's long-dormant Estates—and in Brittany, long a stronghold of resistance to ministerial authority. On July 5, 1788, to head off these menaces, Brienne announced that the Estates-General would be convened. The announcement made government authority crumble even further. By early August, the treasury was virtually empty, and Brienne had to resign in favor of the popular former minister Jacques Necker.

Meeting of the Estates-General

The summoning of the Estates-General raised new and divisive questions. How were the deputies to be chosen? And how was the assembly to be organized when it met? In the past, the Estates-General had met in three separate chambers representing respectively the clergy, the nobility, and the Third Estate, or commoners. The two privileged estates, the clergy and the nobles—who collectively amounted to less than 3 percent of the population—thus controlled two of the assembly's three chambers and could dominate its proceedings. This perspective suited many of those who had opposed arbitrary ministerial authority under Louis XV and his successor. They saw the nobles, particularly the aristocratic judges of the *parlements*, as the natural leaders of the nation and its protectors against the king's arbitrary power. But articulate members of the Third Estate feared their interests would be ignored.

Movements in the provinces offered two new models for the Estates-General. In Dauphiné, reformers drafted a plan to restore its long-dormant Estates in the form of a single assembly in which half the deputies would represent the two privileged orders, and half the Third Estate. They defended their plan on the grounds that, like the English constitution, it would ensure harmony among the three Estates by giving the privileged orders a stake in the new system. Events in Brittany pointed in a very different direction. In this province, where impoverished petty noblemen feared seeing themselves overshadowed by wealthy urban commoners, the privileged orders rejected any concessions to the Third Estate. Their opponents countered by urging the Third Estate to claim all authority for itself.

This argument was transferred to the national level in one of the most influential pamphlets written in the late fall of the 1788—the abbé Sieyès's *What Is the Third Estate?* Sieyès began with a ringing declaration:

The plan of this work is very simple. We have three questions to ask: first, What is the Third Estate? Everything. Second, What has it been in the political order up to now? Nothing. Third, What does it demand? To become something.

The Third Estate, Sieyès asserted, “has ... within itself all that is necessary to constitute a complete nation,” since its members did all the useful work in the country. “If the privileged order were abolished,” he concluded, “the nation would be not something less but something more.” He called for a single assembly representing those who made real contributions to the public welfare, from the humble peasant to the wealthy merchant and the learned lawyer. This group, Sieyès maintained, had a single common interest: “It is the nation.” Its representatives had every right to legislate on their own, disregarding any objections of deputies from the privileged orders.

As the elections to the Estates-General proceeded in the first four months of 1789, Sieyès's radical arguments seemed to have limited support. Necker had managed to get Louis XVI to defuse some opposition by announcing the “doubling of the Third” on December 27, 1788; as in Dauphiné, the commoners would elect twice as many deputies as each of the other two orders. But this decree did not determine whether the deputies from the three orders would meet together in a single assembly or in separate chambers, in which case the Third Estate's predominance would be meaningless.

The elections to the Estates-General transformed the notion of public opinion from an abstract slogan into a living reality. In every parish and district of the country, most adult men and even a few women met to choose representatives and to voice their views on what issues the Estates-General should consider by drawing up *cahiers de doléance* (lists of grievances). Few of these *cahiers* expressed revolutionary demands, but they showed that there was a strong consensus in favor of the creation of a representative government, the abolition of tax privileges and other forms of legal inequality, and a number of other important reforms. Although the *cahiers* gave the deputies a mandate for significant reforms, they also revealed important differences between the country's main social groups. Peasants expressed numerous complaints about the seigneurial rights that weighted directly on them. *Cahiers* drawn up by urban members of the Third Estate voiced more general demands for reform and social equality. The nobles' *cahiers* criticized arbitrary government authority but offered few concessions on the issues raised by the peasants. Pamphleteers in Paris claimed to speak for a “fourth estate” of poor people who had been largely excluded from the election process; a few even called for political representation for women.

The Parliamentary Revolution

On May 3, 1789, the approximately 1,200 deputies to the Estates-General paraded through the streets of Versailles. Along with well-known participants in the public debate that had occupied the country ever since Calonne had convened his Assembly of Notables, they included obscure parish priests, backwoods noblemen, and small-town lawyers. The Third Estate deputies, whose plain black costumes contrasted with the colorful finery of the clergy and nobles, had been told to group themselves by provinces. Instead, they deliberately mingled with colleagues from other regions, a way of showing that they considered themselves representatives of a single nation. Many of the members of the Estates-General had practical experience in public affairs as royal officials, in local government, or as administrators in the church. Among the assembled deputies, there was an articulate minority of self-proclaimed “patriot” radicals, bent on a sweeping transformation of French public life. Their program included a fixed, written constitution for France that would limit the king's powers, the abolition of legal privileges, a representative assembly, religious toleration, and press freedom. Initially, however, most of the deputies rejected such radicalism and looked for leadership to Louis XVI, whose popularity had soared since he had agreed to the convocation of the Estates-General, and to the chief minister, Necker.

The king and Necker proved unprepared for a revolutionary situation. Louis, an honest and well-meaning man, could not bring himself to abandon the principles of absolutism; Necker had little sense of how to handle a crisis. Charged with presenting the government's program to the Estates-General in its opening session, he delivered

38 *Collapse of the Old Monarchy*

a long-winded account of the monarchy's fiscal problems but offered no specific proposals. The king and Necker left the Estates-General itself to decide whether it would vote by head or by order.

With no commitment to significant reform from the king, the deputies of the Third Estate had every reason to fear that subsequent proceedings would be dominated by the two privileged orders. This fear drove even the moderate members of the Third Estate to support a radical proposal put forward by one of its most flamboyant members, count Mirabeau, a nobleman who had been refused a seat by his own order. The Third Estate paralyzed the assembly by refusing to organize itself and begin work unless the other two orders immediately agreed to meet and vote in common. The underlying issue was fundamental: Was France to become a country of citizens enjoying equal rights, or was it to remain divided into groups with differing privileges?

On June 10, after five weeks of futile negotiations, the Third Estate deputies had become sufficiently impatient to endorse Sieyès's motion to send a final invitation to the nobles and the clergy to form a single assembly, and to proceed without them if they declined. Joined by a handful of deputies from the clergy, they then voted on June 17, 1789, to assume the new name of National Assembly, thus proclaiming they were speaking for the national community as a whole. News of their actions reached a wider public through the regular letters that many of the deputies sent home and via hastily created newspapers that summarized the debates. In public places throughout the nation, ordinary citizens, living embodiments of the public opinion that had taken on a new level of importance with the monarchy's virtual abdication of power, eagerly followed the debates.

The Third Estate's decision to transform itself into a National Assembly was a challenge not only to the other two orders, but to the authority of Louis XVI. Three days later, he announced a special royal session of all three orders to take place on June 23. In the meantime, royal officials locked the deputies of the National Assembly out of their regular meeting hall. Fearing the king would try to quash their decisions, the members of the Assembly held an emergency session in the only building they could find that was large enough to accommodate them, the king's indoor tennis court. There, on June 20, 1789, they swore the dramatic "Tennis Court oath," pledging not to allow themselves to be dissolved until they had given France a new constitution.

The king's speech on June 23, 1789, failed to halt this defiance of royal authority. When royal officials ordered the deputies to disperse after the king's speech, Mirabeau defiantly replied, "We are here by the will of the French people, and we will only be dispersed by the force of bayonets." Faced with the intransigence of the Third Estate deputies, the king was forced to back down: on June 27, 1789, he himself ordered the deputies of the clergy and the nobility to join the National Assembly. The former deputies of the Third Estate seemed to have won, and the National Assembly began drafting a constitution. But the bayonets Mirabeau had referred to were not out of the picture. The ministers had begun to assemble troops near the capital; the incipient revolution still risked being put down by force.

The Storming of the Bastille

While the troops assembled and the deputies debated, the rest of the French population did not remain passive. The agitation accompanying the elections to the Estates-General

and the unrest stemming from difficult economic conditions had already led to outbreaks of violence in several parts of the country. In April 1789, artisans and workers in Paris's populous *faubourg* Saint-Antoine had sacked the mansion of a wallpaper manufacturer, Reveillon, who had been accused of trying to lower wages. This incident was a warning of the height social tensions had reached. Political excitement was even more visible in Paris than social unrest. Crowds gathered every day in open spaces like the gardens of the Palais-Royal to listen to reports from Versailles and speeches by self-appointed orators. Popular sympathies were overwhelmingly with the leaders of the Third Estate, and hostile to the "aristocrats" of the other two orders. Political agitation affected even the soldiers stationed in and around Paris, some of whom openly expressed their sympathies for the National Assembly.

In Versailles, the king's most conservative advisors had now gained the upper hand. On July 11, 1789, Louis dismissed Necker who, in spite of his ineffectual performance at the opening of the Estates-General, was still regarded as an advocate of reform. Even before the deputies in Versailles could respond to this move, the people of Paris took to the streets in protest. As fears of an armed intervention to put down the movement grew, the crowd besieged several royal arsenals in the city demanding arms. Meanwhile, army commanders warned Versailles that they could not count on their men to fight against the Parisians.

On July 14, 1789, a large crowd drawn from all levels of the Paris population surrounded the Bastille, an imposing medieval fortress-prison that had become a symbol of despotic authority. Women, enraged that the price of the bread they had to buy for their families had just been raised again, urged their husbands to join the movement. Defended by only a few hundred troops, and housing at that moment only seven prisoners, the Bastille had little real significance. But when the Parisians, infuriated by the commander's refusal to give up the weapons it contained, stormed and captured it, their victory became an immediate symbol of the newly born popular revolutionary movement. The "victors of the Bastille" had defeated the forces of the old government and of the privileged groups that had depended on it; the aroused populace had shown its strength.

The storming of the Bastille, publicized in images like the one reproduced here, was only one episode in a wave of revolutionary uprisings that swept over France in July 1789, some before and some after the Parisian events. In provincial cities, crowds forced the royal intendants and the appointed municipal officials to yield power to improvised councils of men loyal to the National Assembly. Artisans and workers destroyed machinery that they blamed for creating unemployment. In many rural regions, peasants terrified by rumors that "brigands" in the pay of unidentified opponents of the Revolution were about to devastate their crops turned on the manor houses of local nobles in a mass movement that came to be known as the "Great Fear." Everywhere, royal authority dissolved and power passed into the hands of those who declared their loyalty to the Assembly and adopted the new symbols of patriotism, such as the red, white, and blue tricolor cockade that the Paris patriots had created. This largely uncoordinated movement from the masses ensured the success of the National Assembly and of what was now openly proclaimed to be a revolution.

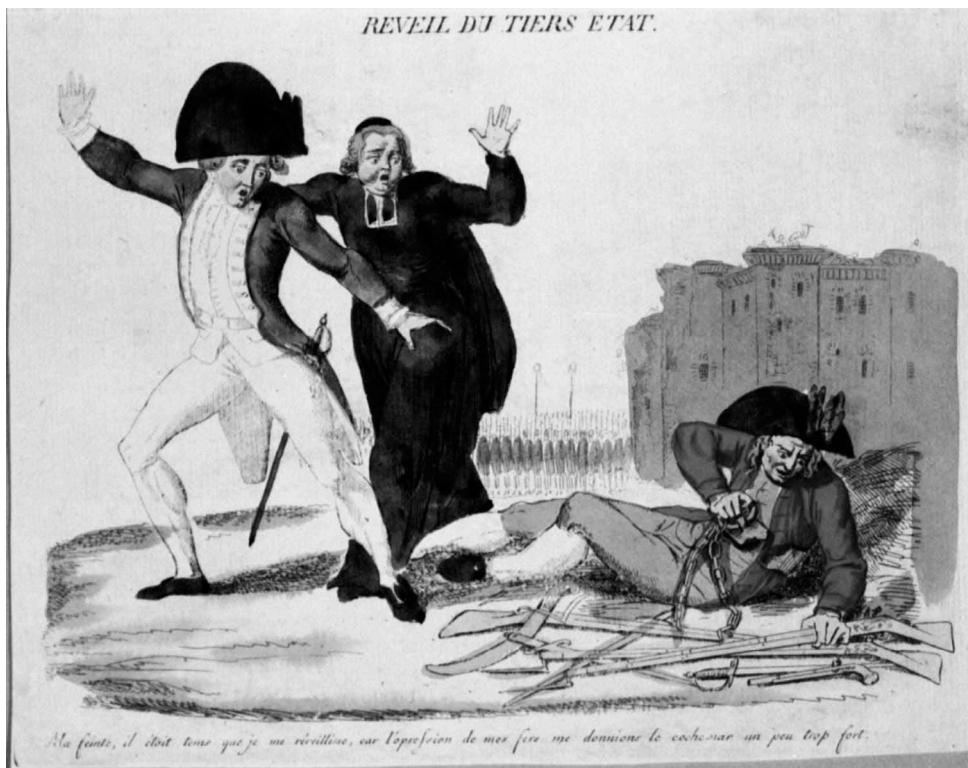


Figure 5.1 Reveil du Tiers Etat

In this striking image, representatives of the nobility and the clergy recoil in alarm as a figure representing the commoners of the Third Estate frees himself from his chains and prepares to take up arms. In the background, supporters of the Revolution are demolishing the fortress of the Bastille and carrying the severed heads of victims killed in the uprising. Widely circulated caricatures like this one communicated the significance of the events of 1789 even to those who could not read. (French Political Cartoon Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (LC-USZC2-3595))

Note

- 1 Cited in Jean Egret, *The French Pre-Revolution, 1787–1788*, trans., Wesley D. Camp, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 2.

6 Successes and Failures of the Liberal Revolution

The “Abolition of Feudalism” and the Declaration of Rights

In the wake of the Paris crowd’s storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789, the 1200 deputies to the National Assembly in Versailles found themselves in an extraordinary position. The danger from the king was gone: His army and his bureaucracy had ceased to function. They could count on a national groundswell of popular support. But the violence accompanying the capture of the Bastille and the wave of peasant revolts in the countryside were warnings that the revolutionary process could easily get out of control. The deputies needed to establish a new social and political order before the disintegration of the old one plunged France into chaos.

In the six weeks after the fall of the Bastille, the Assembly took two decisive steps that defined how the new society and the new government would differ from the old. First, they eliminated the dense thicket of special privileges that had blocked all previous efforts at change. On August 4, 1789, the Assembly, alarmed by reports of rural insurrection arriving from around the country, convened a special session to consider abolishing some of the nobility’s special privileges. This limited motion was unexpectedly upstaged by a sweeping proposal to do away with the whole complex of the nobility’s “feudal” privileges. The success of this motion launched a chain reaction of further renunciations. Representatives of the clergy moved to abolish tithes; deputies from the provinces and privileged cities gave up their immunities from taxes, customs fees, and other regulations. The sale of government offices was done away with, and recruitment to church, government, and military positions was thrown open to all citizens, regardless of status. By the time the exhausted deputies adjourned at dawn on August 5, they had gone far to “abolish the feudal regime entirely,” as the preamble to their edicts promised, and to clear the way for the creation of a unified national community in which all citizens would have equal rights.

The deputies later qualified many of the changes they had initially voted for. Peasants soon discovered, for instance, that the deputies had made distinctions between “feudal” obligations derived from medieval serfdom and “real” obligations considered analogous to rent; peasants were to pay their landlords compensation for the latter. Nevertheless, the underlying thrust of the reforms adopted on August 4 remained intact. The Assembly had repudiated the corporate-group basis of prerevolutionary society and decided that France would henceforth be a community of legally equal citizens. No subsequent French regime has been able to reverse this fundamental accomplishment.

Having dismantled the old order, the National Assembly turned to establishing a new one. After a week of heated debate, on August 27, 1789, it endorsed the 17-article “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen,” a statement of principles for

the future constitution. The declaration, broader in scope than the American Bill of Rights, was formulated in abstract and universal terms, suggesting that the principles it contained were valid not only in France but throughout the world. Its first article echoed the opening sentence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* in proclaiming that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights." Article Two stated that government existed only to protect the rights of "liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression." Article Three asserted that "the source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation," thereby transferring the king's claim to supreme authority to the community of citizens. Article Six, again borrowing language from Rousseau, proclaimed that "law is the expression of the general will" and promised all citizens a right to participate in the making of it. In passing the Declaration, the Assembly encouraged the French people to think of themselves in a new way: as active citizens of the nation, endowed with rights they were entitled to protect through political participation.

At the same time, however, the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen," like the decrees of August 4–5, 1789, incorporated significant ambiguities. Did the term *man* include all human beings or only members of the male sex? Did the Declaration's promise of freedom apply to the 800,000 enslaved black people in France's overseas colonies, a radical idea vehemently opposed by deputies from the colonies, whom the Assembly had admitted to membership? How was the document's promise of equality to be reconciled with its explicit defense of private property, the unequal distribution of which left some citizens better off than others? Did the promise of liberty include the liberty to oppose the Revolution itself? And who was entitled to speak for the nation, the new source of political legitimacy? Much more explicitly than the American Revolution, the French movement raised questions of principle.

The October Days

Although he had appeared ready to accept the victory of the Revolution after the fall of the Bastille, Louis XVI was not prepared to endorse the drastic restructuring of government and society implied by the August 4 decrees and the Declaration of Rights. Throughout the month of September, the king refused to make a public statement accepting them. Louis's foot-dragging raised public suspicions, not only among the deputies, but also in the general population. In Paris, the high bread prices that had provoked public unrest earlier in 1789 exacerbated discontent. When reports reached Paris that an army regiment recently summoned to Versailles had held a raucous banquet in which the patriotic tricolor cockade was supposedly trampled on the floor, popular anger exploded. On October 5, a large crowd of women assembled at the Hôtel de Ville to demand that the city government take action to lower food prices and protect the Revolution. Dragging cannon, and accompanied by male members of the National Guard, the women set out to march on the royal palace. The guard commander, Lafayette, although opposed to direct popular action, joined the expedition to avoid losing control over his own troops.

The marchers reached the royal palace late at night. To avoid a bloody confrontation between the crowd and the palace guards, the king agreed to demands that he and his family come to Paris; the National Assembly, relegated to the sidelines during the confrontation, had no choice but to agree to follow. On October 6, 1789, the royal family set off, accompanied by the marchers, who were carrying the

severed heads of some of the royal guards on pikes and noisily celebrating their success. Like the storming of the Bastille on July 14, the “October Days” showed that popular violence could have major political effects. The king and the Assembly, brought to Paris by force, were now much more exposed to organized pressure from the populace. The uprising demonstrated that women, normally excluded from politics, could influence the course of events; several pamphleteers seized on the opportunity to issue demands that they be granted political rights and that marriage law be made more egalitarian.

A New Political Culture

As the deputies to the National Assembly debated the provisions of the new constitution, the citizens they claimed to represent were creating the forms of a new participatory political culture. Four fundamental features of this new political culture were newspapers, the theater, political clubs, and public festivals. The periodical press was the most important medium by which the public at large could follow the proceedings of the National Assembly and other events of the Revolution. Prior to 1789, France’s domestic newspapers had been tightly controlled by censorship. As soon as the Estates-General convened, this system broke down. Over 130 new journals were launched before the end of 1789. Most of these papers came out daily and gave readers the sense of being in the midst of great events that were moving forward at tremendous speed. The new medium was no monopoly of the Revolution’s supporters; counter-revolutionary polemicists used it just as successfully as did advocates of change. Throughout the Revolution, the conflicting voices in the press regularly undermined legislators’ efforts to establish stability. Pre-revolutionary limitations on the theater were also swept away. Playwrights rushed to turn out dramas based on current events, and the reactions of audiences were often clear signs of currents of public opinion.

Clubs channeled and organized the public’s participation in the new politics. The first ones grew out of the informal gatherings in coffeehouses and other public places accompanying the elections to the Estates-General. By November of 1789, a group of patriot deputies had founded a club that met regularly to plan common strategies in the Assembly. In January 1790, this club—which now included private citizens as well as legislators—named itself the Society of Friends of the Constitution. It was more commonly called the Jacobin Club, because it met in a church formerly owned by the Jacobin order. The Paris Jacobins and the numerous provincial clubs that affiliated with it became a powerful political network supporting the Revolution. By mid-1791, there were 434 Jacobin clubs, and the number grew into the thousands during the Revolution’s radical phase from 1793 to 1794. These clubs brought supporters of the Revolution together to hear the latest news from the Assembly, discuss the issues of the day, and plan local political initiatives. Until 1791, membership was restricted by a relatively high admission fee, and the early Jacobins tended to be substantial members of the middle classes who distrusted radicalism. In later years, however, as membership in the Jacobins was opened up to poorer citizens, the club network supported increasingly radical policies. In Paris, more democratic clubs in popular neighborhoods like the *faubourg Saint-Antoine* spread new political ideas among the working classes. Women participated in some of these clubs and formed their own groups in at least 60 towns.

Public festivals provided a symbolic representation of the movement's achievements in which the whole population could participate. The first of these revolutionary celebrations was largely spontaneous, like the 1789 planting of "liberty trees"—poles festooned with revolutionary symbols—in many towns. Toward the end of that year, local patriotic groups and units of the National Guard began organizing "federations," bringing together groups from several towns or regions. This movement culminated on July 14, 1790, in a national Festival of Federation celebrated on Paris's *Champ de Mars*, now the site of the Eiffel Tower. Before an enormous crowd, the king and the leaders of the Assembly and the National Guard swore loyalty to the new constitution. Press reports and the accounts of those who had come from the provinces gave the entire country a sense of having participated. One important purpose of revolutionary festivals was to give the country a new form of historical memory. All of France's prior history was now stigmatized as an "old regime" that was best forgotten. Festivals conveyed the message that the Revolution marked a new beginning for the nation and its population.

The Accomplishments of the National Assembly, 1789 to 1791

After the October Days, the political tension in Paris declined. For the next year and a half, although violent episodes affected some provinces, the capital was relatively calm, allowing the National Assembly's deputies to concentrate on their task of constitution making. Many historians have called this period the "liberal revolution," because it was characterized by the enactment of fundamental legislation inspired by the principles of individual liberty announced in the Declaration of Rights. But this phase of the movement has also been labeled the "bourgeois revolution," because the Assembly's interpretation of liberty favored educated property owners. Only they could fully exercise the rights of citizens, as the new constitution outlined them. The new order did open many new possibilities for members of the bourgeoisie, but the conscious intent of the legislators was to make changes that would benefit the entire population.

By the fall of 1789, the 1200 men who had arrived in Versailles at the beginning of May, uncertain about their role and for the most part unacquainted with one another, had found leaders and organized into informal parties. Those who considered themselves the most determined supporters of the Revolution stationed themselves in seats on the left side of the speaker's desk; the most outspoken opponents of the Revolution claimed the right side of the room. Ever since, the terms *left* and *right* have served to characterize radicals and conservatives, not only in France but throughout the world.

The size and diversity of the Assembly made it difficult for any one figure to dominate it. The strongest potential leader was Mirabeau. He was a master orator and also one of the first politicians to create his own newspaper. But his transparent ambition, his dissolute private life, and the apparent inconsistency of his policy—after challenging royal authority in the Estates-General, he defended a strong executive branch in the constitutional debates—made most deputies distrustful of him. No other deputy came close to obtaining sway over the Assembly and the revolutionary movement. Some established themselves as representatives of minority viewpoints—such as Maximilien Robespierre, a small-town lawyer from northern France who became the leading advocate of the common people's interests, or abbé Maury, a clergyman from humble origins who became an eloquent defender of royal authority, church interests,

and slavery. But the National Assembly set a precedent that had lasting influence in France by making its decisions collectively through debate and bargaining, and blocking the emergence of strong leaders.

The king was certainly no longer in a position to fill the leadership vacuum. Louis XVI stubbornly resisted the Assembly's measures that he regarded as undermining royal authority or religion, but he put forward no positive program. Queen Marie-Antoinette had a firmer character, but her widely rumored efforts to get the government of Austria, her homeland, to intervene against the Revolution made her and the monarchy increasingly unpopular. A flood of violent pornographic pamphlets accused her of sexual immorality as well as political intrigue, reflecting a wider prejudice against women's influence in public affairs. With real power concentrated in the National Assembly, the king's ministers—so influential under the Old Regime—no longer had much authority.

In the fall of 1789, the Assembly debated the question of what powers the king should have in the new constitution. At first, a moderate group, the *monarchiens*, dominated the Assembly's constitutional committee. They epitomized the fusion of property-owning nobles and the bourgeoisie that had seemed poised to govern the country at the end of the Old Regime; their proposed constitution represented a compromise between the old order and the principles of the Revolution. It would have given the king extensive powers, including the right to veto laws he disapproved of. The legislature would have consisted of two houses as in England, one of peers and one representing the common people. More radical deputies, such as Sieyès, rejected this scheme. They feared that the king would use his veto to paralyze the Assembly and that the division of the legislature would leave the aristocracy with too much power. The Assembly settled instead on a plan that reduced the king's authority and gave real power to an elected one-house legislature, free to act without restrictions because it directly represented the will of the people. The king was given only a suspensive veto—the right to delay legislation for three two-year sessions of the Assembly.

The Right to Vote

Another contentious issue concerned the right to vote. Most deputies accepted the argument that only voters who owned a certain amount of property and thus had tangible individual interests to defend could be expected to make intelligent political choices. In December 1789, they voted to restrict the franchise to adult males who paid taxes equivalent to three days of an ordinary laborer's wage, with a higher wealth qualification for deputies. By the standards of the time, the property qualification for voting was quite modest. It would have allowed well over half of the adult male population to participate in national elections—a group that extended well beyond the narrow bounds of the bourgeoisie. Eligibility to the legislature was much more restricted: Only about 72,000 men, many of them nobles rather than bourgeois, met the qualifications. Having declared that all French citizens were equal, defenders of both provisions were hard put to answer Robespierre's challenge, "Can the law be termed an expression of the general will when the greater number of those for whom it is made can have no hand in its making?"¹

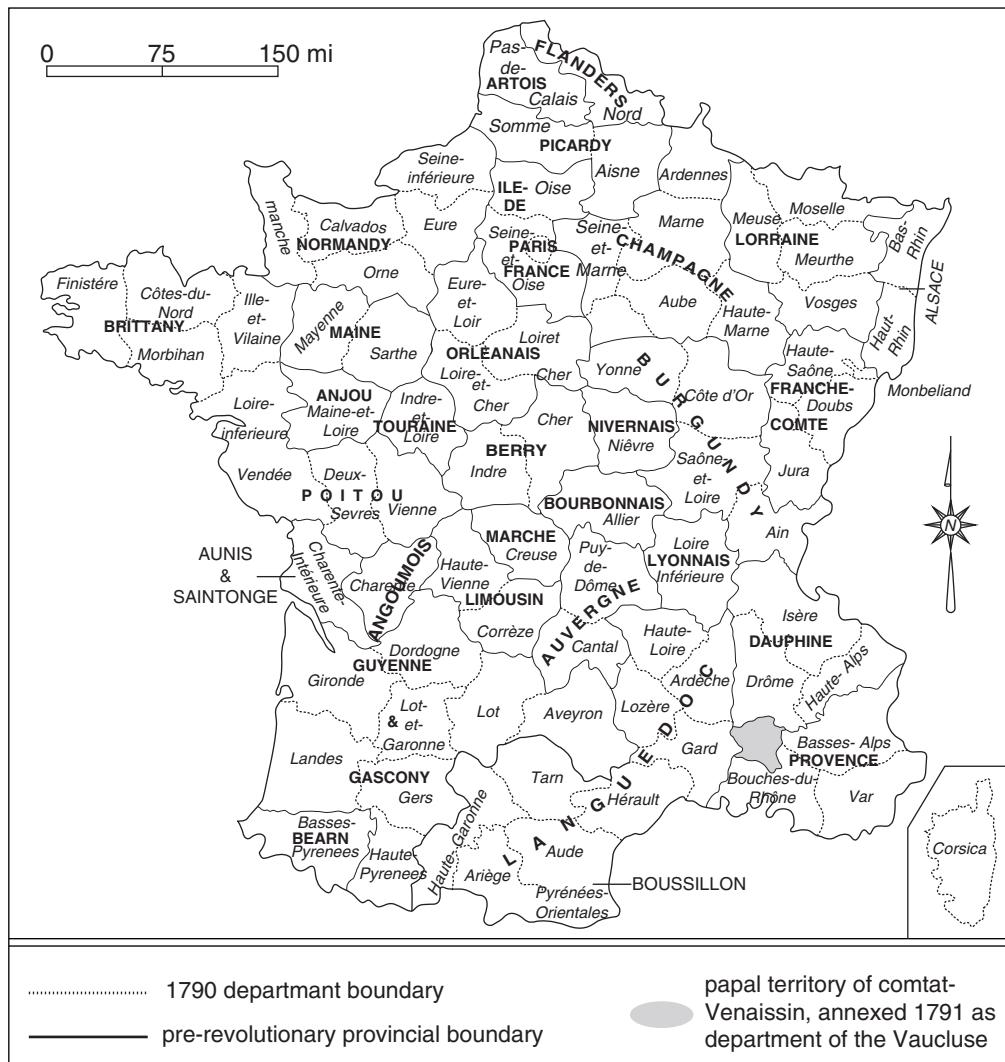
Although the majority of the Assembly voted to bar the poorest citizens from any direct participation in politics, the deputies were concerned about the needs of

the lower classes. The Assembly's Committee on the Needy launched a broad inquiry into France's social problems and proposed that the government assume responsibility for assuring a decent standard of living for orphans, the poor, the ill, and the elderly. The new constitution included provisions for a permanent Committee of Public Instruction, with a mandate to make elementary education available to all citizens. Unfortunately, neither the National Assembly nor any subsequent revolutionary government ever had the resources to implement these sweeping proposals. And in some areas, the laws it drafted did adversely affect the poor. The Le Chapelier Law of June 1791, which barred all "coalitions" aimed at affecting wages and prices, made workers' organizations and strikes illegal.

Extending Citizenship

Unable to make significant improvements in the lot of the poor, the National Assembly was more successful in broadening the definition of citizenship. Protestants, who had already obtained civil recognition in 1787, were quickly granted full rights. The question of France's Jewish population provoked more debate. They had traditionally been regarded as members of a separate "nation," granted permission to reside in France and follow their own laws. Unlike the Protestants, French Jewish people were required to swear an oath of loyalty and renounce any special privileges in order to gain citizenship. Influenced by representatives of colonial interests, who warned that the abolition of slavery would destroy France's flourishing overseas trade, the Assembly avoided that issue. In May 1791, however, it did grant rights to some of the mixed-race inhabitants of the colonies. The granting of rights to Jewish and free black people underlined the fact that membership in the French nation did not depend on religion or race. The legal system was reformed to abolish arbitrary detention without trial and to give defendants a better chance of proving their innocence. The censorship system had collapsed in the summer of 1789; the Assembly debated several proposals to limit the "excesses" of the press, but never passed any of them. In March 1791, the Assembly voted to abolish the guilds and to give all citizens equal access to all trades, thus consecrating economic individualism.

With a few exceptions, the Assembly's legislative measures to make all male citizens equal in rights proved to be part of its enduring accomplishments. So was its division of France into new administrative districts, called departments. These units, of approximately equal size and named after prominent geographic features such as rivers or mountains, were intended to rationalize France's administrative system and to break down provincial attachments that might conflict with loyalty to the nation as a whole. With minor modifications, the departments have survived to the present day. The decentralized system of local government initially set up in 1790 proved far less enduring. Elected local officials were to collect taxes, administer justice, and enforce laws. The central government became almost totally dependent on the efforts of these authorities, whom it could not control, to carry out its directives. Before long, conflicts between local and national officials proved that this system contained serious weaknesses. The Assembly also abolished all the various tolls and customs boundaries that had divided France economically. The entire country thus became a unified market, which the deputies hoped would encourage commerce and manufacturing.



Map 6.1 Provinces and Departments

In dividing France into departments of roughly equal size, the National Assembly attempted to follow the boundaries of the prerevolutionary provinces as much as possible. This map shows present-day boundaries. for most departments. The Paris region was divided into new departments in 1968.

The Revolution and the Reform of the Church

The liberal legislation enacted by the National Assembly had the potential to create a conflict between the wealthy, who stood to benefit most from the new system, and the mass of the population; the Third Estate was no longer a united block. But the issue that most visibly threatened the liberal revolution grew out of the Assembly's attempt to reform the French Catholic church. The Assembly had first raised this issue in

November 1789, when it claimed the right to expropriate the church's property and sell it to private owners. Decades of denunciation of the clergy's mismanaged wealth had paved the way for this idea, which struck the deputies as the only practical way to overcome the financial crisis they had inherited from the old regime. Furthermore, since the Assembly intended to have the civil government take over many of the functions traditionally performed by the church, such as schooling and aid to the poor, it seemed logical that the government inherit the resources that the church had used to pay for these services. Even many of the clergy, particularly the underpaid parish priests who were now to receive salaries from the state, supported the move.

The expropriation of church property led to broader proposals for restructuring the church. Church reform had been a widespread demand throughout the eighteenth century, and numerous *cahiers* had encouraged the Estates-General to carry it out. "Establishments without any purpose, useless men highly salaried, useful men without recompense"—so the deputy Jean-Baptiste Treilhard summed up the revolutionaries' view of the Old Regime church.² Even most of the clergy recognized that reform was long overdue. It was the nature of the reforms imposed, and the lack of consultation with the church, that caused conflict. Many Catholics were already alarmed by the granting of full civil and political rights to religious minorities. In some regions where Catholics and Protestants had long been in conflict with each other, notably the southern city of Nîmes, violence broke out, and some Catholics started to regard the Revolution as a plot against their faith.

More conflicts resulted from the deputies' internal restructuring of the church. The Assembly redrew the boundaries of dioceses to correspond to the boundaries of the departments it had established, abolishing more than a third of the prerevolutionary bishoprics. More controversial was the decision to have departmental electoral assemblies choose priests and bishops. French kings had long had the right to choose bishops. Now that authority was vested in the people rather than the king, this procedure seemed logical to the legislators. But the reform overturned the hierarchical structure of the church, under which authority descended from God through the pope to the bishops, who in turn consecrated priests. Devout Catholics objected that the electoral assemblies charged with selecting priests might include Protestants, Jewish people, and atheists.

Disregarding these criticisms, the Assembly enacted its Civil Constitution of the Clergy in July 1790. Every French priest soon had to make a public choice. To accept these reforms was to endorse the Revolution and the nation; to refuse them was to challenge both. The issue split France almost in half. Slightly more than 50 percent of the parish clergy took an oath to accept the Civil Constitution, but the remainder, including all but seven French bishops, refused. Where parish priests refused the oath, the government sought to install newly promoted priests who had accepted it, often in the face of violent local resistance to the "intruder." The imposition of the Civil Constitution thus raised in acute form the issue of how far the revolutionary government could go in imposing its decisions on citizens who opposed them in the name of religious freedom.

The King's Flight and the Crisis of 1791

The religious conflict led directly to the undermining of the National Assembly's constitutional system because it helped drive Louis XVI to make an open break with the Assembly. The king repeatedly delayed giving his official sanction to the Assembly's

major measures. He refused Assembly demands for strong measures against nobles and members of the royal family who fled abroad after July 1789. From their refuges across the border, these émigrés lobbied foreign powers to invade France and free the king. Louis issued token appeals to his relatives, but failed to convince the supporters of the Revolution that he meant them.

On June 20, 1791, the king finally tried to break out of his increasingly awkward situation by fleeing the capital. As soon as the king's disappearance was discovered, the nervous National Assembly sent couriers in pursuit, while announcing to the public that the monarch had been "abducted." The discovery that Louis had left behind a manifesto denouncing the Revolution discredited this story, but the Assembly hesitated to condemn the king and commit itself to replacing him. Such an action would call the entire constitutional edifice so painfully erected since July 1789 into question. Meanwhile, delays caused the royal family to miss their rendezvous with troops that had been recruited to escort them. In the small town of Varennes, local officials recognized the fugitives and halted their coach. Heavily guarded, the royal party traveled back to Paris.

The flight to Varennes was a clear indication that the Revolution had reached a crisis. For the first time, there were open calls for the creation of a republican government and the abolition of the monarchy; the absence of popular support for the king showed that much of the population was ready to accept such a move. The leaders of the National Assembly quickly decided, however, that they needed to preserve the monarchy in spite of the king's actions. Antoine Barnave, one of the most eloquent spokesmen for the Third Estate in June 1789, now became the leading defender of this policy. If France was to become a stable country in which the rights of property owners were secure, he argued, there had to be a strong executive authority, independent of public opinion, to maintain the laws. To remove the king from office would be to "begin the Revolution anew," and it would invite demands for complete democracy and the redistribution of property.

Barnave and his followers prevailed in the National Assembly, which voted to absolve the king for his flight, but they also split the revolutionary movement. On July 16, 1791, Barnave and most of the other deputies quit the Jacobin club, leaving a small rump organization led by Robespierre, and founded a rival club, the Feuillants. On the following day, Paris radicals called for a mass demonstration to protest the Assembly's decision. When disorders broke out, the National Guard commander, Lafayette, and the mayor of Paris, Sylvain Bailly—both sympathetic to the Feuillants—sent in the National Guard. About 60 demonstrators were shot down in the ensuing "massacre." This repression appeared to confirm the radical claim that the Assembly despised the common people. A constitution put into effect under these conditions rested on shaky foundations.

With the king's fate resolved and the radicals temporarily silenced, the National Assembly hastened to conclude its work. In August and September 1791, the deputies "revised" the entire constitution, altering a number of clauses to strengthen the safeguards for property owners, including colonial slaveholders. The conflict over the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the king's flight, and the massacre of July 17, 1791, were clear evidence that grave difficulties threatened the new liberal order, but the deputies could be forgiven for taking pride in what they had accomplished. They had broken the political deadlock that had prevented necessary political reforms for decades before 1789. They had given France a complete new constitutional system,

50 *Successes and Failures of the Liberal Revolution*

based on the principles of legal equality for all white male citizens and individual liberty. If they failed to solve some of the most pressing problems they had come up against—such as poverty, education, and slavery—they had at least proclaimed principles that would become the basis of French life over the course of the next century. The first two years of the Revolution had been accompanied by a certain amount of violence, but, in view of the scope and complexity of the issues the movement had raised, the amount of overt conflict had been relatively modest. Had the Revolution been successfully stabilized in 1791, France would have had a constitution incorporating liberal and democratic principles that were not to be adopted in most other European countries until 100 years later.

Notes

- 1 Cited in George Rudé, ed., *Robespierre* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1967), 14.
- 2 Cited in Paul H. Beik, ed., *The French Revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 138.

7 The Radical Revolution

If the Revolution had been stabilized in 1791 ... Unfortunately, chances of such an outcome were few. The new system of constitutional monarchy was not inherently unworkable. But the attempt to implement it with a monarch who had proven his ill will would have been difficult at best. In addition, the National Assembly had declared its own members ineligible for reelection. This left power to new legislators, bent on enforcing controversial policies such as the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, in the face of a growing challenge to the principle of limiting political rights to the propertied classes. This risky political gamble failed, and the liberal phase of the Revolution gave way to a far more radical one in which a republic replaced the monarchy, and the principle of democratic suffrage replaced the effort to limit political participation to the wealthy. The violence that had been more or less controlled during the movement's liberal phase now became more intense, creating deep divisions in the country that had a lasting effect on its history.

The Legislative Assembly and the War

Most of those who voted in elections for the new Legislative Assembly chosen in September 1791 were supporters of the Revolution, and the deputies they elected were more enthusiastic about the Revolution than the population as a whole. Most of the 745 new deputies were from the bourgeois groups that had gained the most from the National Assembly's reforms. The moderate Feuillant group started out with more supporters in the new assembly than the radical Jacobins, but most of the provincial club network supported Robespierre and his allies. Meanwhile, royalist journalists openly urged army officers to join the émigrés and called for a foreign invasion to quash the Revolution.

The Revolt against Slavery

The Legislative Assembly immediately had to deal with a major revolt in France's most valuable colony and with the threat of war in Europe. A massive slave uprising in the Caribbean sugar island of Saint-Domingue had broken out on August 22, 1791, but the news only reached Paris in October 1791. Deputies such as Jacques-Pierre Brissot, a leading opponent of slavery and racial discrimination, blamed the revolt on the stubbornness of the whites in the colony, who had succeeded in getting the May 1791 law giving rights to a few men of mixed race repealed just before the National Assembly had finished its work in September 1791. The Legislative Assembly did send

troops to fight the rebellious slaves, but in March 1792, it voted to extend citizenship rights to all free people of color in the colonies. Desperate though they were for military aid, the whites in Saint-Domingue remained violently opposed to such a step. Some of them began negotiations to encourage the British and Spanish to occupy the colony, thereby justifying the French revolutionaries' accusations that its opponents were prepared to commit treason to stop it.

The Legislative Assembly had to cope with spreading social unrest closer to home as well. The 1791 grain harvest was a poor one, and during the fall there were outbreaks of social violence in many rural areas. In February 1792, crowds in Paris, angered by the high price of sugar, attacked merchants' shops. The deputies, who saw the Revolution as a movement on behalf of the people, could not understand why ordinary men and women would blame the Revolution for economic problems. They found it easier to claim that members of the former privileged orders had incited these disturbances. Although the deputies supported a political system based on individual rights, many of them were now ready to back laws curtailing the rights of groups blamed for obstructing the new order. In November 1791 the Legislative Assembly voted stringent laws against refractory priests and émigrés.

The Move toward War

The issue of the émigrés was one of the main factors that drove the Legislative Assembly to its most important decision: its vote on April 20, 1792, to declare war against Austria. The revolutionaries of 1789 had been persuaded that war, the result of kings' greed for conquests and glory, was one of those evils of the Old Regime they could abolish. They proclaimed France's intention to renounce territorial expansion, and stripped the king of his right to declare war. Initially, Europe's other governments had shown little concern about the Revolution; most were pleased at the weakening of France's power. Louis XVI's flight to Varennes finally stirred the rulers of Austria and Prussia to issue a declaration threatening action if Louis XVI was harmed, fueling the French patriots' contention that the Revolution was in danger from abroad.

In France, support for war came from the extremes of right and left. A majority of the radical Jacobin supporters of the Revolution openly favored hostilities. According to their leading spokesman, the journalist-deputy Brissot, war would exalt patriotic fervor, consolidate national unity, and expose traitors who hoped for the defeat of the Revolution. The Jacobin war party found unlikely allies in the king and queen. Once war was declared, the king, as commander-in-chief of the army, would have expanded powers. If France was successful, his position would be strengthened; if the French army was defeated, the foreign powers would end the revolution. When the Austrian government rejected a French ultimatum to expel the émigrés from German territory, the king asked the Assembly to declare war, and so, on April 20, 1792, France entered into a conflict that would last for more than two decades.

The outbreak of war focused attention on the condition of the French army and navy. Until July 1789, the army had been the king's, not the nation's. It consisted primarily of long-term professional soldiers, many of them from abroad. The officer corps of both the army and the navy were almost entirely aristocratic; regardless of merit, few commoners could hope to rise above the rank of noncommissioned officers. The National Assembly had undertaken to reform the military, like every other French

institution. Soldiers and sailors were given the same rights as other citizens, and commoners could now become officers. Many aristocratic officers resented the new revolutionary order, and relations between officers and their men were strained, as a bloody soldiers' revolt at Nancy in August 1790 and a massive naval mutiny in Brest in October 1790 had shown. At the start of the war, army morale was low. The troops were quick to blame their commanders for any reverses they suffered; at Lille, panicked French soldiers massacred their own commander. In Paris, news of these defeats plunged the institutions of the constitutional monarchy into a fatal crisis.

The Overthrow of the Monarchy

By the start of the war, the constitutional system put into effect in 1791 was already coming apart. Particularly in Paris, the large population of artisans and shopkeepers who had made up most of the crowd that stormed the Bastille had never accepted their exclusion from politics. In the spring of 1792, pro-revolutionary political activists had mobilized strong support among these *sans-culottes*—so called to distinguish them from the educated classes who wore elegant knee breeches, or *culottes*, instead of workers' long trousers. By mid-1792, *sans-culotte* activists had begun to agitate against both the king and an Assembly that seemed indifferent to the Austro-Prussian army's advance into France.

At the beginning of July 1792, revolutionary militants, including both radical members of the Assembly and *sans-culotte* leaders, began planning for an uprising to remove the king, take emergency measures to defend the country, and give France a new constitution. To lead the insurrection, the plotters relied on the armed *fédérés*, volunteer units from all over the country that had come to Paris for the celebration of July 14. The unit from Marseille was especially noted for its revolutionary ardor; its members had arrived in Paris singing a rousing marching song, composed a few months earlier, whose verses called on all "children of the fatherland" to take up arms and let "the blood of our enemies water our fields." This "song of the Marseillais," now France's national anthem, became a rallying cry for the assault on the monarchy.

On July 28, 1792, the commander of the allied forces, the Duke of Brunswick, issued a proclamation holding the inhabitants of Paris responsible for any attack on the king. When the news reached Paris, the insurrectionary leaders decided to act. By 9:00 a.m. on August 10, thousands of armed *sans-culottes* were converging on the Tuileries. Fighting broke out between the king's loyal Swiss guards and the insurgents, leaving over 1,000 dead and making August 10 the bloodiest of the revolutionary *journées* (days of violence). It was also among the most decisive politically. The Legislative Assembly suspended Louis XVI from his functions and voted to call nationwide elections for a Convention that would determine the fate of the monarchy; it thus scrapped the Constitution of 1791. By declaring that all adult males were eligible to vote for the Convention, the Assembly abandoned the effort to keep power in the hands of the propertied classes. The liberal or bourgeois Revolution had ended; the democratic and radical Revolution had begun.

The Convention and the Republic

Like the National Assembly, the National Convention that convened in September 1792 made sweeping changes in France. Even more than the National Assembly, its work has

been controversial. To some in France, this first attempt at the creation of a popular republic laid the groundwork for the basic institutions that make France a democratic society today. To others, the Convention was a violent and destructive regime comparable to the totalitarian dictatorships of the twentieth century. However it is viewed, no historian can deny that the three years of the Convention's session were among the most event-filled in all of French history.

The National Convention was born in crisis, and its entire three-year existence was shaped by a series of urgent problems. The deputies elected in September 1792 had to deal with both the Austro-Prussian invasion and the issue of constitution-making. The 749 new deputies included many members of the previous two assemblies. Lawyers and former government officials predominated among them, and they were still overwhelmingly members of the bourgeoisie. They were young (two thirds were under 45) and strongly committed to the Revolution.

These deputies had little in common with the Parisian *sans-culottes*. The deputies still wanted to govern through orderly processes, whereas the *sans-culottes* considered the crisis facing the Revolution too grave to be dealt with through slow-moving legislative debates. To appease them, the Legislative Assembly had set up a Revolutionary Tribunal on August 17, 1792. There was no appeal from its sentences, and those condemned to death were executed with a new mechanical beheading device that experts had created for the National Assembly. Supposedly painless and efficient, the guillotine was named for Dr. Guillotin, a legislator who had wanted to abolish cruel punishments.

The establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal was not enough to satisfy the *sans-culottes*' demand for immediate measures to defeat the counter-revolution. On September 2, 1792, reacting to news that the key fortress of Verdun was about to surrender, crowds surrounded the principal Paris prisons where political suspects were being held. They set up improvised tribunals and forced the jailers to bring out the prisoners. In all, some 1,300—most of them guilty of nothing more tangible than having held privileged status before 1789—were killed. The September massacres stained the Revolution's reputation throughout Europe; they also made the Convention acutely aware of the need to convince the *sans-culottes* that it was doing everything necessary to defend the Revolution.

Military successes soon gave the Convention some breathing room. On September 20, 1792, the day the Convention first assembled in Paris, the revolutionary army met the invaders at the village of Valmy. The French, now better organized than in the first battles of the war, profited from their superiority in numbers and their artillery to halt the Austro-Prussian advance.

Girondins and Montagnards

Even before the arrival of news from the battlefield at Valmy, the Convention had set its political course. On September 22, 1792, it voted to proclaim France a republic and thus cut the last institutional link between the Revolution and the Old Regime. But what was to be done with Louis XVI? The debates on his fate revealed that the Convention was deeply divided. The two main groupings that emerged in the Convention during these debates have gone down in history as the Girondins and the Montagnards. The Girondins, so called because several of them represented the Gironde department around Bordeaux, were a loose group of sixty or so deputies. Their most prominent spokesman was Brissot; their spiritual guide was Madame

Roland, the wife of another leading member in whose salon the Girondin deputies regularly met. The Girondins were talented and ambitious individualists, who had made their way in the world by virtue of their own abilities. Not friends of the Old Regime, they were nevertheless susceptible to the concerns of France's bourgeois elites; many of them represented the country's big trading cities, such as Bordeaux and Marseille.

The Montagnards, who now controlled the Jacobin club, were just as bourgeois as the Brissot group, but they were often from more modest origins. The most prominent was Maximilien Robespierre, the small-town lawyer whose numerous speeches on behalf of the less privileged during the National Assembly had given him a national reputation. In the Convention, his main allies were the popular agitator Georges Danton (one of the leaders of the August 10 movement) and the radical journalist Jean-Paul Marat. Compared to the Girondins, the Montagnards voiced greater concern for the lower classes. Their rhetoric tended to be more moralistic than the Girondins', their political positions more uncompromising.

The two rival groups clashed regularly from the first weeks of the Convention's sessions, with the Girondins accusing the Montagnards of plotting to establish a dictatorship and the Montagnards responding that their opponents were in collusion with the imprisoned king. Indeed, the Girondins did believe that executing the king would create new difficulties for the Revolution. But the Montagnards' most effective orator, the 25-year-old Louis Antoine Saint-Just, responded that "those who worry about whether it is fair to punish a king will never establish a republic."¹ In the end, the Montagnards' harsh logic prevailed. After considerable debate, the deputies voted overwhelmingly to find Louis guilty of treason. By a narrower majority—380 to 310—they endorsed the Montagnard demand to execute him immediately, and he was guillotined on January 21, 1793. The Convention had irreversibly cut itself off from any compromise with the Revolution's opponents.

There was also no compromise in the party struggle that divided the Convention. The resulting instability became more and more dangerous as the problems facing the Convention became more critical. After some temporary successes in late 1792, the French armies had to face new foes, most notably Britain and Spain. By March 1793, the Austrians had regained the initiative in Belgium and the Rhineland, while the Spaniards launched an invasion in the south. Charles-François Dumouriez, the defeated French commander in Belgium, tried to lead his troops against the Convention and then went over to the Austrians, leaving the main French army in disarray. By this time, optimism that populations in neighboring countries would adopt French principles and revolt against their own governments had faded. The French were particularly disappointed by the lack of support from the United States. The revolutionary government had sent a representative, Edmond Genet, across the Atlantic to enlist the Americans in the conflict against Britain. Genet's arrival divided American opinion. Thomas Jefferson's Democratic Republican supporters welcomed him, but their Federalist rivals denounced the growing radicalism of the French Revolution and supported President Washington's policy of neutrality. The "Genet affair" ended the warm relations between France and the United States forged during the American Revolution; French opinion came to see Americans as ungrateful people who had fallen back under the influence of their former British rulers.

Opposition to the Revolution was also mounting at home. In March, an attempt to draft new troops for the army set off a peasant uprising in rural western France, centered in the

department of the Vendée. This rebellion grew into a veritable civil war, waged with unrelenting cruelty on both sides. Although resistance to the draft set off the uprising, the Vendéans had much broader grievances against the Revolution. The deeply Catholic rural population in western France resented the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and many peasants had had to watch as the pro-revolutionary town dwellers in their region reaped most of the benefits from the abolition of feudal dues and the sale of church lands. The Vendée peasants' proclamation of a war for the restoration of king and church found little echo elsewhere in the country, but their complaints about the Revolution's failure to address their problems were shared in many other regions.

In addition to the war and the Vendée rebellion, the Convention had to deal with a worsening economic crisis. A poor grain harvest in 1792 sent food prices soaring again; this inflation undermined the *assignats*, the paper currency supposedly backed by the value of nationalized church lands that the National Assembly had begun to issue in 1789. Wages failed to keep up with the rise in prices, leading to *sans-culotte* protests. To calm the unrest, the Convention passed a law setting maximum prices for wheat and flour, and giving the government the right to requisition supplies from reluctant growers. This measure showed the Convention's growing tendency to meet crises by restricting individual freedoms guaranteed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and by strengthening the powers of the national government.

The political crisis in the Convention had echoes throughout the country, as moderates and radicals struggled for control of local governments. To the Montagnard leaders in Paris, the situation cried out for action; only if they could gain firm control of the Convention could they deal with the country's pressing problems. On May 31, 1793, the Montagnards organized a repetition of the August 10, 1792, insurrection. National Guard units of *sans-culottes* surrounded the Convention, and two days later the intimidated assembly suspended 29 Girondin deputies. The defeated Girondin leaders fled to the provinces; the Montagnards were left in control of the Convention, which itself was clearly at the mercy of whoever could rouse the armed *sans-culotte* battalions. After expelling the Girondins, the Montagnards quickly enacted a new constitution, based on universal suffrage and promising all citizens a "right of subsistence" in the form of jobs or welfare benefits. They then voted, however, to suspend the implementation of the constitution until the crisis facing the country had been overcome; it would never actually be applied.

The Montagnards had gained control of the Convention, but they seemed likely to lose much of the rest of the country. In addition to foreign enemies and the Vendée rebels, there was a new danger—a series of revolts against the Jacobin-dominated Convention in some of the major provincial cities. These uprisings, known as the "federalist movement," often took place in towns whose deputies had been among the purged Girondins, such as Caen, Bordeaux, and Marseille. Unlike the Vendée rebels, the federalists proclaimed their loyalty to the Revolution and the Republic. But they condemned the influence of the radical *sans-culotte* movement and the centralization of authority in Paris.

Luckily for the Convention, the revolts in different parts of the country remained uncoordinated and the federalists' essentially negative program failed to rally widespread support, whereas the Convention had the advantage of being the focus of patriotic resistance to foreign threats. The federalist movement, together with the assassination of the journalist-deputy Marat on July 13, 1793, added to the Montagnards' sense of being under siege and made them even more reluctant to compromise

with opponents. At Lyon, cannons loaded with chain shot were used to mow down hundreds of captured rebels in a mass execution that was intended to dramatize the Revolution's determination to stamp out its enemies. The Convention even tried to expunge the rebel cities' names from the map: Lyon was to be renamed "Liberated Commune."

The Dictatorship of the Jacobins

The Convention's vote to impose a new name on a major city reflected its conviction that the Revolution could only succeed if it truly remade French society from top to bottom. Between the summer of 1793 and the summer of 1794, under the leadership of the Jacobin Montagnards, a powerful centralized government was created that simultaneously dealt with pressing practical problems and tried to create a new republican society. To meet the immediate crises it had to deal with, the Convention for the first time found strong and capable, if ruthless, leadership. Both contemporaries and historians have recognized Maximilien Robespierre as the leading figure among the Jacobins. His reputation for disinterested devotion to the public good gave him the nickname "the Incorrputible." In the end, Robespierre would be brought down by his obsession with his vision of the ideal republic and his inability to see those who differed with him as anything other than counter-revolutionary conspirators. But historians who see him as merely a ruthless fanatic overlook the complexity of his conduct and of the challenges he faced.

Although Robespierre was the best known of the Montagnard leaders, he was never a dictator in his own right. Rather than entrusting executive power to a single person, the Convention in the fall of 1793 gave day-to-day authority over the government to its Committee of Public Safety, a group of 12 deputies who oversaw the ministries and the conduct of the war. Robespierre's colleagues were strong-minded men who never hesitated to argue with him. To meet the multiple crises it had to deal with, the Committee of Public Safety improvised a new system of government whose main features were a concentration of power in the hands of the national government, and the elimination of all potential opposition. Robespierre justified this system of revolutionary government in one of his most celebrated speeches, delivered in December 1793. The object of the Revolution, he said, was to guarantee individual freedom, as the men of the National Assembly had attempted to do. But before a constitution based on civil liberty could be put into effect, the enemies of liberty had to be defeated, and this could only be done by a government free to act without restrictions—a revolutionary government.

This doctrine clearly reflected the circumstances of 1793, in which the men of the Convention had had to combat armed enemies on all sides and take extraordinary measures to keep the population fed. But the idea of using the instrument of government to remake the French people tempted the radical leaders. In a manuscript he left unpublished, Robespierre's young colleague Saint-Just planned an austere modern-day Sparta, in which children would be taken from their parents at the age of seven and raised in state schools, so that their only loyalty would be to the nation. Robespierre, for his part, talked of a Republic of Virtue, from which private selfishness would be banished.

Although the dictatorship of the Committee of Public Safety did have some of the characteristics of twentieth-century totalitarian governments, it remained much more directly connected to real and urgent problems around it. After the defeat of the federalist

revolts, the Convention turned its attention to the foreign threat. On August 23, 1793, it decreed a *levée en masse*, or mass mobilization. According to the terms of the decree, every part of the population was to participate in the war effort. All young unmarried men were to join the army; the others were to manufacture weapons and transport provisions, while women sewed clothes and tents. “The children shall turn old linen into lint [for bandages]; the old men shall repair to the public places, to stimulate the courage of the warriors,” the decree ordained.² The conscription order was never universally obeyed, but patriotic nationalist fervor was strong enough to build up an army sufficient to halt the foreign invasions. At the front, the Convention ruthlessly weeded out unsuccessful commanders, executing several defeated generals and promoting young, determined officers—such as Napoleon Bonaparte who was rewarded for his role in putting down a counterrevolutionary revolt in the southern port city of Toulon. By the end of 1793, the tide of the war began to turn in France’s favor.

Controlling the home front remained difficult. Food prices continued to climb, and the Convention’s policies seemed to have little effect on the economic crisis. Unable to restore the economy, the Committee of Public Safety took measures to create a system of government that would bring *sans-culotte* protesters and all other potential foes under control. The Law of Suspects, passed on September 17, 1793, allowed the imprisonment of anyone whose conduct, talk, or writings could be interpreted as having opposed the Revolution. Local revolutionary militants were organized into surveillance committees to identify suspects, and the number of prisoners rose to as many as 500,000. Show trials in October 1793 ended with the execution of the queen; the leading Girondin deputies and their political muse, Madame Roland; and Antoine Barnave, the main defender of the constitutional-monarchist 1791 constitution. While the Law of Suspects organized the system of political repression, the General Maximum law of September 29, 1793, extended controls to most of the economy. The prices of most basic commodities were fixed at a level one-third higher than in 1790, while wages could not exceed a level one-half above the 1790 rate. To enforce its authority outside of Paris, the Committee dispatched trusted Convention deputies on missions, giving them full power to overrule or even replace local elected authorities. A law passed on December 4, 1793, specified that the Convention’s decrees took precedence over all local measures and gave the central government authority to remove and replace local administrators. This centralized power was enhanced by the tremendous growth in the government’s bureaucracy: Hundreds of new clerks were hired to see that the new laws were carried out. In the provinces, local militants, charged with enforcing the Maximum and rounding up suspects, found themselves converted into public officials under Parisian control.

Revolutionary Culture

Determined to exert administrative and economic control over the whole country, the Convention’s leaders were also determined to create a new revolutionary culture. On October 5, 1793, the Convention introduced a new calendar, meant to show that the Revolution had begun a new era in human history. Years were to be counted from the establishment of the French Republic on September 22, 1792, so that 1793 to 1794 became Year II. The year was divided into 12 months and each month was divided into three ten-day weeks, or *décades*, and given a poetic name based on its weather—*brumaire* was the month of *brumes* or fog, *floréal* the month when flowers bloomed.

The new calendar was related to the de-Christianization campaign that reached its height in late 1793. Whereas the National Assembly had intended to reform the church, the de-Christianizers aimed to abolish it altogether. Revolutionary militants intimidated priests into renouncing their vows and marrying. They destroyed religious statuary and confiscated church buildings for granaries and other secular purposes. In November 1793, the de-Christianizers turned Paris's Notre-Dame Cathedral into a Temple of Reason and staged a ceremony in honor of a Goddess of Liberty, impersonated by an actress from the Opera. Robespierre and the leaders of the Convention stood aloof from the de-Christianization campaign, and eventually reined it in; they feared its potential for further inflaming religious conflict. But to much of the French population, de-Christianization became synonymous with the Revolution. The split between Catholics and their opponents was to remain one of the main divisions in French life for well over a century. The revolutionaries also attempted to root out dialect languages, which they saw as a threat to national unity.

In place of France's traditional culture, the revolutionaries of the Year II propagated new symbols and new values. On public buildings and government agencies' letter-heads, slogans like "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity or Death" and icons like an all-seeing eye—a reminder of the vigilance every patriot was expected to maintain—replaced the symbols of Catholicism and the monarchy. Plays and public ceremonies celebrated French military victories and propagated an increasingly militant nationalism. Revolutionary supporters encouraged their fellow citizens to address each other with the familiar *tu* rather than the more formal *vous* that had traditionally been used to show respect for social superiors. This revolutionary culture reinforced the consciousness of a break with the past at the level of everyday life, but its enforced nature created much resentment against the new regime.

Along with their program of cultural transformation, the Montagnards also enacted a number of measures meant to favor the lower classes. In the countryside, the Convention settled disputes about the interpretation of the National Assembly's decrees of August 4, 1789, in favor of the peasants, rather than the landlords. Redemption payments for feudal dues were abolished (in most areas, the peasants had refused to pay them anyway) and the Convention ordered that church and émigré lands put up for auction be divided into smaller lots so that peasant bidders would have a better chance of purchasing them. In February 1794, the Convention passed its most radical social legislation, the so-called *ventôse* decrees. They called for the confiscated estates of counter-revolutionaries to be divided up and distributed free to indigent patriots.

Whereas the Montagnard Convention tried to demonstrate its concern for the poor, its actions affecting women were more ambivalent. Like the Constitution of 1791, the democratic constitution of 1793 reserved political rights exclusively for males. The breakup of convents after 1790 abolished a sphere in which religious women had been able to live largely outside of male control. Some revolutionary legislation went against this trend; the 1792 divorce law gave both sexes the right to initiate proceedings, and new inheritance laws guaranteed sisters and brothers equal shares of their parents' estates. In general, however, revolutionary reforms changed a situation in which some privileged women had enjoyed more freedom than most unprivileged men into a society in which all men enjoyed more rights and freedom than all women.

A few feminist militants, such as Olympe de Gouges, a self-educated playwright, saw liberating possibilities in the Revolution's principles. In 1791, she published a "Declaration of the Rights of Woman," proclaiming that "woman is born free and

lives equal to man in her rights.”³ In the summer of 1793, when radical agitation in Paris reached its height, militants organized the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women and took a leading role in public demonstrations. Far from favoring this involvement in revolutionary politics, however, male revolutionaries sought to limit it. In November 1793, the Society was banned for promoting street agitation. A Convention spokesman laid down the official revolutionary line: nature itself had destined men and women for separate roles. As Rousseau had urged, women were to confine themselves to the home, where they could serve the nation by raising their children as patriots.

Excluded from the revolutionary movement, some women turned against it. Female participation in bread riots had served to radicalize the Revolution in 1789, but by 1794 such protests often expressed counterrevolutionary sentiments. Women were prominent in many protests against the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. It was during the revolutionary period that the division—between a male population attracted to liberal and rationalist ideas and a female population loyal to traditional religious beliefs—that characterized France throughout the nineteenth century first emerged.

Although the radical revolutionaries limited women’s rights, they took important steps on behalf of people of color. These actions were prompted by developments in France’s embattled Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue, where most of the white population had turned against the Revolution. Desperate for support, the French republican commissioners in the island, Sonthonax and Polverel, appealed to the black insurgents who had risen up against slavery in 1791. In June 1793, they offered freedom to black men willing to join the French army, and later that year, they extended emancipation to the whole black population. In February 1794, three deputies from Saint-Domingue—one representative from each racial group: black, white, and mixed-race—arrived in Paris and urged the National Convention to endorse this action. The resulting law of 16 pluviôse II (February 4, 1794) made France the first western nation to abolish slavery, and the former slave J. B. Belley became the first black man to sit in a European legislature. In Saint-Domingue, the most effective of the black military leaders, Toussaint Louverture, joined the French forces in May 1794. Thanks to his black soldiers, the French were eventually able to drive back the British and Spaniards.

The Great Terror and *Thermidor*

Obsessed with maintaining national unity, the Montagnard leaders engaged in a constantly intensifying hunt for hidden conspirators whose activities they blamed for the Revolution’s continuing difficulties. In the provinces, some of the deputies on a mission interpreted their mandate to “make terror the order of the day” in extreme terms. At Nantes, Jean Baptiste Carrier, sent to crush the peasant guerrilla war that had continued even after the defeat of the Vendean army in the summer of 1793, emptied the prisons by drowning thousands of victims in the Loire River. To end the Vendean resistance, “infernal columns” of republican troops scoured the countryside, burning villages and fields. The total loss of life in the region, where fighting continued for several years after the fall of Robespierre, may have exceeded 100,000.

Another spectacular feature of the Terror was its use against an increasing number of the Revolution’s most dedicated supporters. Already in 1793, the arrested Girondin

deputy Vergniaud had commented prophetically that “the Revolution, like Saturn, is devouring its children.” In late 1793, the Convention’s leaders became convinced that some of their own colleagues were cooperating in a shadowy “foreign plot” to sabotage the Revolution. As accusations swirled, distrust poisoned relations between men who had previously been political allies. In early March 1794, the Committee of Public Safety tried and executed the most prominent spokesman of the Paris *sans-culotte* movement, the journalist Hébert, author of the *Père Duchêne*, the pamphlet-journal that had become the symbol of radical patriotism, and his supporters. The Committee then turned against a group of Convention deputies who had raised their voices against the Terror. Whereas Hébert and his followers had been *Ultras* who wanted to push the Revolution too far, Robespierre charged, these men—particularly the famed orator Danton and the journalist Camille Desmoulins (who had criticized the Committee in his paper, the *Vieux Cordelier*)—were *Citras* who wanted to stop the Revolution before it had gone far enough. Danton’s group’s fate was proof that even the most prominent supporters of the Revolution were not immune to the Terror.

Rather than reassuring the Committee, the executions of the Hébertists and Dantonists merely accelerated the pace of the Terror. The atmosphere of enforced conformism and the evident lack of genuine enthusiasm that the Terror itself had engendered made the movement’s leaders even more fearful. Saint-Just complained that “the Revolution has become frozen” and called for ever more drastic measures against hidden counter-revolutionaries. Two days after his elaborately staged Festival of the Supreme Being, organized to demonstrate the nation’s spiritual unity and adherence to revolutionary principles, Robespierre rammed through the Convention a law that stripped suspects sent before the Revolutionary Tribunal of all rights to defend themselves. Convention deputies no longer enjoyed any special immunity from arrest. This law unleashed the so-called Great Terror of the summer of 1794. In six weeks, the guillotine decapitated over 1,300 victims in Paris alone.

The Great Terror took place just as the real dangers to the republican government were diminishing. At the battle of Fleurus on June 26, 1794, the French armies in the north decisively defeated the Austrians and drove them out of Belgium. The French occupied Brussels on July 10, 1794, the beginning of a 20-year period of territorial expansion. As the crisis atmosphere of 1793 faded, a number of deputies in the Convention and even within the Committee of Public Safety began to turn against Robespierre’s Terror policy. On July 27, 1794, the ninth day of *thermidor* in the new calendar, they unexpectedly took the floor in the Convention to accuse Robespierre of plotting to make himself dictator. The Convention voted overwhelmingly to arrest him and several of his closest supporters. Robespierre and his fellow arrestees briefly escaped and rallied some supporters at the Hôtel-de-Ville, the seat of Paris’s city government. But the mass of the Paris *sans-culottes*, alienated from the Montagnards by the execution of the Hébertists and the repression of the popular movement, made no effort to support them. Early the next day, the Convention’s troops captured the escaped prisoners and hustled Robespierre, Saint-Just, and over 100 of their supporters to the guillotine. Once again, the mechanism of the Revolution had turned against those who had set it in motion. But the events of 9 thermidor marked a turning point; instead of intensifying the revolutionary process, the victors—no longer pushed along by organized popular protest—began to dismantle the machinery of revolution.

Notes

- 1 Saint-Just, *Oeuvres Choisies* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 76
- 2 Cited in John H. Stewart, *Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (New York: MacMillan, 1951), 473.
- 3 Cited in Darline Gay Levy, Harriet B. Applewhite, and Mary D. Johnson, eds., *Women in Revolutionary Paris, 1789–1795* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 90.

8 The Return to Order

The Thermidorian Reaction

To a remarkable degree, the first five years of the Revolution, from 1789 to 1794, had set the shape of French society for decades to come. The revolutionaries had eliminated corporate privileges and given equal rights to all male citizens; they had established a strong central government; they had strengthened the position of the property-owning bourgeoisie and of peasant landholders, and sharpened the gender division between men and women. They had established a secular society, bound together by a powerful sense of nationalism that helped sustain a formidable military machine. What they had not been able to do was to assure political stability. The many regimes that followed the republican Convention between 1794 and 1870 can all be seen, in various ways, as attempts, none of them fully successful, to resolve this problem.

The thermidorian conspirators were the first group to confront this difficulty. Initially it was not clear whether they wanted to eliminate Robespierre's methods, or just the man. But thermidor unleashed a reaction against the Terror and the radical Revolution that they could not control. For the next five years, the question of how to repudiate the worst excesses of the Revolution without endangering the new principles it had articulated, and the new elites it had brought to power, dominated French political life.

Since they had overthrown Robespierre because he had tyrannized the Convention and the people, the thermidor plotters found themselves compelled to dismantle the dictatorial apparatus of the Terror. Thousands of prisoners arrested under the Law of Suspects were released from prison, and several of the most prominent architects of the Terror—including Carrier, who had overseen the massacres of rebels in Brittany, and Fouquier-Tinville, the prosecutor of the Revolutionary Tribunal, were tried and executed. In November 1794, the Convention ordered the closing of the Paris Jacobin Club. Bands of elegantly dressed young men, the *jeunesse dorée*, or “gilded youth,” cheered on by female *merveilleuses* whose extravagant dress underlined their separation from the poor, harassed former *sans-culotte* activists and destroyed symbols of the radical revolution. In the provinces, similar groups were even more violent; there were numerous killings of former Jacobin militants in Lyon, Marseille, and other areas where counter-revolutionary sentiment was strong.

The “thermidorian reaction” was marked by a sharp turn against the Montagnards' social and economic policies. The Convention dismantled the Maximum system and left prices free to find their own levels. Without the threat of the guillotine to sustain it, the *assignat* rapidly lost all value. This runaway inflation

benefited peasants with grain reserves and middle-class speculators, who scooped up national lands at bargain prices. But it was devastating to the poor, whose wages lagged far behind the skyrocketing price of bread. The hungry Parisian *sans-culottes* reacted by staging two massive protest demonstrations in April and June 1795; during the latter, they invaded the Convention and murdered one of the deputies. As always when food prices were an issue, women made up much of the crowd in these protests. But these uprisings lacked the leadership that had made popular mobilization effective in 1792 and 1793. Aided by troops and the *jeunesse dorée*, the Convention dispersed the crowds and proceeded even more determinedly to eliminate the democratic elements of the Revolution.

The new attitude toward the lower classes was reflected in everyday life and in politics. While the poor struggled to afford bread, the wealthy crowded cafés, restaurants, and theaters where they applauded plays that denounced the horrors of Robespierre's reign and presented the *sans-culottes* as bloodthirsty monsters. In the streets, the honorific term *Monsieur* ousted the revolutionary *Citizen* as the preferred form of address, and the polite form *vous* regained its ascendancy. Objects of sympathy during the early revolutionary years, the poor were now seen as violent and dangerous, needing to be disciplined by the rigorous workings of economic laws.

After the popular protests of April and June 1795, the thermidorian Convention decided to scrap the democratic constitution enacted but never put into effect in 1793. In the new constitution, the deputies sought to accomplish three main goals: to protect the interests of property-owners, to prevent the rise of another dictatorial government, and to exclude the common people from politics. The new Constitution of 1795 limited the right to vote and to hold office to the wealthiest taxpayers; only about 30,000 met the requirements to serve in the departmental electoral colleges where deputies were to be chosen. All references to social rights were eliminated from the constitution, and the deputies added a "declaration of duties" designed to remind the poor of their obligation to respect the rights of property and the authority of the law. Somewhat surprisingly, the thermidorians did maintain the abolition of slavery decreed during the Terror. The spokesman for the constitutional committee told the deputies that "It is the one act of justice that tyranny had you pass."¹

The administrative system established under the new constitution remained highly centralized, but the powers of the central government were carefully divided. The five-member Directory, the executive branch, was held in check by a two-house legislature made up of a Council of Five Hundred and a smaller Council of Elders (limited to deputies aged over 40). To make sure that the new government did not suddenly turn against the deputies who had served in the Convention and who were now often accused of having permitted the excesses of the Terror, an accompanying decree required voters to choose two thirds of the deputies for the new councils from the outgoing members of the Convention.

The new constitution inspired none of the enthusiasm that had greeted the first revolutionary constitution of 1791. In Paris, counter-revolutionary activists in the section assemblies seized on the law forcing voters to choose two-thirds of the new deputies from the Convention to mobilize an armed assault on that body just before it was due to dissolve. To suppress this uprising of 13 *vendémiaire*, Year IV (October 5, 1795), the Convention called on troops from the regular army. This use of the army to maintain the republican regime set a dangerous precedent, particularly since one of the officers employed was the ambitious young general Napoleon Bonaparte.

The Directory

A nineteenth-century French journalist once remarked that the Directory was the only regime in the country's history for which no one ever expressed nostalgia after it fell. It has been remembered as a period of flagrant corruption, unscrupulous intrigue, and fruitless confrontation. Recent historians have demonstrated that the Directory years were not as chaotic as this stereotype suggests. It was during the Directory that the principles of a republican ideology separated from the dangerous extremism of the revolution's radical period were first articulated. The regime's greatest weakness was that it failed to inspire loyalty even among its own leaders: their betrayal eventually destroyed it.

The political leaders of the Directory lacked the stature of their predecessors under the National Assembly and the Convention. Paul Barras, a corrupt thermidorian Convention deputy who served on the five-man Executive Directory throughout its existence, symbolized their shortcomings. Barras had no commitment to revolutionary ideals, but he had a single-minded devotion to keeping himself and men like him in power, even at the cost of disregarding the republican constitution he had helped to create. Most of his fellow politicians were successful members of the bourgeoisie who had been active in local affairs during the early years of the Revolution. Having held public office after 1789, and often having invested in national lands, they had good reason to support the republican regime against any counter-revolution.

Despite the lackluster character of its leaders, the Directory succeeded in restoring a certain degree of order to a country racked by six years of revolutionary upheaval. The regime benefited from a favorable economic climate due to a series of good harvests. After an unsuccessful effort to replace the worthless *assignats* with another form of paper money, the Directory reverted to metallic currency. By 1798, monetary stability had been achieved and economic growth resumed. The Directory also resolved the government debt problem that had forced the calling of the Estates-General in 1789, and that had dogged every subsequent revolutionary government. In 1798, it "consolidated" the public debt, writing off two thirds of it. This partial bankruptcy freed subsequent governments from a painful burden. To put the government on a sound financial footing, the Directory systematized the collection of the taxes on land and on business activity imposed by the National Assembly, and added new taxes on luxury items plus a real estate tax calculated according to the number of doors and windows in each taxpayer's house. Easier to collect than the multiplicity of Old Regime taxes, these four taxes remained the main bases of French government revenue for a century. To enforce its policies, the Directory continued the centralization of authority begun during the Terror, sending appointed officials, called commissioners of the executive power, to oversee departmental administrations. Faced with an upsurge of lawlessness in the countryside, the regime used "flying columns" of gendarmes and military courts to impose order. Responding to widespread public pressure, the Directory revised the laws on divorce and inheritance passed during the Revolution's radical phase, making it harder to end marriages and limiting the rights of illegitimate children.

An important aspect of the Directory period was the consolidation of a new set of institutions to organize France's intellectual life. The Convention had already begun to replace the aristocratically dominated royal academies of the old regime with new, more professionally oriented institutions for research and teaching. Examples were the Museum of Natural History, founded in 1793, the *Ecole normale* for

teachers, and the *Ecole polytechnique* for engineers. Both the latter were set-up in 1794 to teach an elite of outstanding students from all over the country. New medical schools, organized along scientific lines, were also opened that year, and the *Institut* replaced the abolished academies in 1795. These new institutions made Paris the world's center in science and medicine for the next several decades. Leading philosophers and social thinkers formed a group known as the *Idéologues* and elaborated the science of *idéologie*, the analytic study of human thought, which they attempted to relate to new advances in medicine and anatomy. In the salon hosted by Madame de Staël, the daughter of the former minister Necker, members of the *Idéologue* group discussed how a society based on republican values of equality and the rule of law could be organized to ward off the twin dangers of radical democracy and counter-revolution.

The Directory and Foreign Affairs

While the Directory thus took some important steps to stabilize conditions inside France, its most striking achievements were in the realm of foreign affairs. Even before the fall of Robespierre, the French armies had regained the initiative in the war. In the fall of 1794, the revolutionary armies swept through Belgium. In the first months of 1795, they occupied the Netherlands, where they sponsored a “Batavian revolution” in which the old ruler, the *Stadholder*, was expelled and a republican constitution based on the French model was drawn up. In exchange for aiding the Dutch republicans, the French demanded a heavy indemnity. The revolutionary war changed into a war of conquest undertaken for the profit of republican France, and boasting about military victories became a main theme of government propaganda. The army and the leading generals identified with those victories acquired a growing influence in domestic politics.

Under the Directory, France continued this expansion. In 1796 and 1797, French armies penetrated deep into Germany and Italy, where the young General Bonaparte scored spectacular successes, occupying the peninsula as far south as Rome. He applied the policies pioneered in the Netherlands, backing local movements to set up “sister republics,” which were required to pay heavy indemnities to their “liberators.” In many areas, these exactions alienated the local populations, which came to consider French-style reforms a smokescreen for exploitation.

By the summer of 1797, with Bonaparte’s army having crossed the Alps and threatening Vienna, the Austrians seemed ready to make peace, as Prussia and Spain had already done in 1795. Bonaparte—acting on his own, without approval of the Directory—negotiated a treaty in which Austria ceded its claims to Belgium and recognized the French-sponsored republics in Italy. In exchange, he gave them Venice, which his troops had conquered. This exchange of territories, carried out without any regard for their inhabitants’ wishes, showed how completely France had abandoned any pretense of extending the principle of national self-determination to other peoples. With Austria out of the war and Britain limited to naval operations, the French tide of conquest rolled on. In 1798, Switzerland (renamed the Helvetic Republic) was added to the belt of satellite states surrounding the “Great Nation,” as the French referred to themselves. In early 1799, a short-lived Parthenopean Republic replaced the Kingdom of Naples in southern Italy.

Meanwhile, the Directory, fearful of its leading general’s growing popularity, sent Bonaparte on an expedition to Egypt, an idea that attracted him because of the possibility

of founding a French empire in a region rich in history. The French landed and defeated the Turkish, opening the era of European expansion into the Islamic world, but British admiral Horatio Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at Aboukir left their army cut off from France. Undaunted, Napoleon occupied Cairo and began introducing French-style institutions. It was the first example of imperialism carried out under the guise of a "civilizing mission," a justification France would use as it expanded its overseas possessions throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Egyptians, however, resisted the imposition of reforms that ignored Islamic customs and were accompanied by heavy taxes. The brutal force Napoleon used to crush opposition alienated the local population.

The Directory's ambitions also extended to the Americas. Angered by what they regarded as the United States's pro-British policy, the French seized American merchant ships, launching what came to be known as the "Quasi-War" between the two countries. When American diplomats went to Paris to try to resolve the conflict, the Directory's foreign minister, Talleyrand, tried to extort a large bribe from them, in what came to be known as the "XYZ" affair. This further poisoned relations between the two republics. The Americans retaliated by encouraging the ambitions of the black general Toussaint Louverture, who, backed by his black soldiers, increasingly dominated the French colony of Saint-Domingue. By 1798, Louverture had ousted the last of the French officials sent to control him and taken over the colony's government. Under his rule, the black population retained the legal freedom they had gained in 1793, but Louverture instituted a system of forced labor designed to restore the plantation system that the black population had rebelled against in 1791. Worried that the French might attempt to reinstate slavery, Louverture was happy to have American support. France's most valuable colony seemed to be moving toward independence under black rule.

Discord at Home

Although it consolidated French power abroad, the Directory could not achieve political peace at home. The popular *sans-culotte* movement had been crushed, and peasant discontent had died down, but the middle-class landowners, businessmen, and professionals whom the constitution makers of 1795 had expected to form the base of support for the regime remained bitterly divided. Many of these men, including a number who had profited from the Revolution by buying national lands, had been deeply shaken by the Terror and remained hostile to the republican government. They supported politicians who hinted broadly at the restoration of the monarchy and a purge of all those who had held important political positions during the Terror. On the other hand, a number of former Jacobins remained politically active, denouncing the Directory government for being insufficiently dedicated to the principles of liberty and equality. The religious issue was still divisive. Militant republicans and *Idéologue* intellectuals continued to identify Catholicism with counter-revolution and obscurantism, while the faithful resisted the regime's restrictions on worship and religious education.

In its first two years, the government of the Directory strove to steer a middle course, directing a series of alternating blows against the royalists and the neo-Jacobins. In May 1796, the government attacked the radical left. It arrested the journalist Gracchus Babeuf, a radical who advocated communal ownership of

property, and his supporters. Babeuf had tried to organize a conspiracy to overthrow the Directory and install a dictatorship that would carry out his communist program. His plan had never had much chance of success, but his arrest presented the Directory with a chance to pose as the firm defender of social order and the rights of property. The breakup of a plot to restore the Bourbon monarchy in February 1797 allowed the government to show that it was equally opposed to any return of the Old Regime.

Rather than rewarding the Directory for its centrist policy, voters in the first regular parliamentary elections in April 1797 elected conservative deputies. Split among themselves about how to exploit their victory, these new deputies spent the summer of 1797 arguing while the three firmly republican members of the five-man Directory planned countermeasures. With support from the army, whose leading generals were mostly militant republicans, this “triumvirate,” headed by Barras, staged a coup on the 18 *fructidor* Year V (September 4, 1797), expelling their two moderate colleagues from the Directory and purging prominent rightwing deputies from the Councils. This encouraged the militant republicans or neo-Jacobins, who scored important gains in the elections of April 1798. The Directory responded by “correcting” the voters’ decisions in the coup of the 22 *floréal* Year VI (May 11, 1798), installing its own henchmen in contested races. The *fructidor* and *floréal* coups showed that political power had become concentrated in the hands of a self-appointed group of professional politicians who identified the survival of the Republic with their own tenure in office.

Whether a regime with such a narrow base of support could have survived thanks to economic prosperity and military success is hard to say. But the Directory was not ready to cope with a crisis, and by the end of 1798 it was confronting one. A new foreign coalition had assembled against France. It included the intransigent British, the Austrians who hoped to reverse the unfavorable treaty of Campo-Formio of 1797, and the Russians, whose new ruler, Tsar Paul, harbored a fanatical hatred for the Revolution. In the first half of 1799, the French armies reeled backward on every front. The sudden military collapse discredited the Directory at home. The directors once again failed to control the spring parliamentary elections, and a broad coalition of discontented deputies reversed the procedure of the coups of *fructidor* and *floréal*, purging the Directory itself in the coup of the 30 *prairial* Year VII (June 18, 1799).

The *prairial* victors represented two tendencies. Some were neo-Jacobins who believed that the military crisis required a revival of the emergency measures and the patriotic spirit of 1793. Others, led by Sieyès (now a member of the Directory), intended to “revise” the Constitution of 1795 so that it would no longer be vulnerable to periodic challenges from either right or left. At first, the neo-Jacobins seemed to hold the upper hand. They pushed through a new draft law, a forced loan to levy money from the rich, and a “law of hostages,” which allowed local officials to deal with counter-revolutionary unrest by arresting relatives of nobles and émigrés. These measures revived unhappy memories of the Terror, and provoked considerable resistance. Meanwhile, Sieyès and his group conspired to rid themselves of their neo-Jacobin allies. Recognizing their lack of organized public support, the plotters looked for a popular military figure to serve as their figurehead.



Figure 8.1 Goodbye to French Liberty: Buonaparte Closing the Farce

British cartoonist James Gillray's picture of Napoleon Bonaparte imperiously chasing the deputies of the Directory legislature out of their meeting room on 19 brumaire Year VIII, captioned "Goodbye to French liberty: Buonaparte Closing the Farce," conveyed the message that the Brumaire coup meant an end to the revolutionary experiment begun in 1789 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division (LC-DIG-pmmca-07510))

As Sieyès was casting around for a suitable general, the most celebrated of the Directory's commanders unexpectedly reappeared in Paris. Having learned of France's defeats in Europe, and alarmed by letters about his wife Josephine's infidelities, Napoleon Bonaparte had abandoned his stranded army in Egypt and arrived in France at the beginning of October. Large crowds turned out to cheer him as he traveled from the Mediterranean to Paris; his remarkable military accomplishments had made him genuinely popular. Napoleon quickly made contact with the Sieyès group, who arranged for his appointment as commander of the troops in Paris. In three weeks, their coup plan was completed; on the 18 *brumaire* Year VIII (November 9, 1799), it was put into effect.

Deputies sympathetic to the *brumaire* plotters invoked a constitutional provision allowing for an emergency convocation of the legislature outside of Paris in case of a crisis. However, by the time the two Councils met on the 19 *brumaire*, many deputies had become suspicious, and angry debate broke out while troops assembled to intimidate the politicians waited restlessly outside. Finally, the plotters used force to coerce the reluctant legislators into voting full powers to Napoleon and Sieyès to prepare a new constitution. France's first post-revolutionary government had

collapsed, and the lack of public reaction showed how little support the Directory had had.

Note

- 1 Boissy d'Anglas, speech to Convention, 17 ther. III (August 4, 1795), in *Réimpression de l'Ancien Moniteur*, v. 26, issue of 23 ther. II (August 10, 1795).

9 The Napoleonic Years

The conspirators who overthrew the Directory in November 1799 claimed to be protecting the achievements of the Revolution. Officially, France remained a republic, governed by men who had established their careers since 1789. But it quickly became obvious that the *brumaire* coup had produced a fundamental change. The participatory politics inaugurated in 1789, already robbed of much of its substance by the Jacobins and then by the Directory, disappeared, and one man concentrated all real power in his own hands. As First Consul and then as emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte exercised greater authority than any other French ruler before or since. The dramatic story of his rise and fall is inextricably entwined with the growth of French nationalism. And yet many historians have concluded that, despite his ceaseless activity and his impact on the French imagination, Napoleon's lasting accomplishments were relatively modest. Napoleon's most substantial achievement was to consolidate a conservative version of the new society created during the Revolution, in which even the memory of its radical initiatives affecting women's rights and slavery was forgotten.

The Consul and the Consulate

The coup of the eighteenth of *brumaire*, which brought Napoleon Bonaparte to power, was more the work of Sieyès, the veteran politician who had done so much to launch the Revolution ten years earlier, than of the man who reaped the main benefit from it. Like the authors of the 1795 constitution, Sieyès wanted to consolidate the power of moderate republican politicians and bourgeois property holders, and to prevent any revival of either royalism or Jacobinism. The main innovation in Sieyès's scheme was the abolition of the parliamentary elections that had troubled the Directory so much. Instead, he proposed a system of cooptation, in which politicians already in power would pick their own successors from lists of property-owning "notables" drawn up by local electoral assemblies. Before Sieyès could implement his ideas, however, he had to negotiate with the young general he had been forced to bring into the coup plan. He quickly discovered that Napoleon Bonaparte had definite ideas of his own about how France should be governed. The rest of France soon learned the same lesson.

Napoleon was a "child of the Revolution," who owed his career to the upheaval of 1789. Born in 1769 to a poor noble family on the island of Corsica (a territory annexed to France just a year earlier), the young Bonaparte had been educated as an artillery officer, the least prestigious branch of the pre-revolutionary army. Teachers and fellow cadets had noted the young man's intelligence and fierce willpower, but because of his modest background, his prospects for promotion in the prerevolutionary army were

limited. A young lieutenant at the time of the Revolution, he enthusiastically embraced its promise of “careers open to talent.”

The emigration of many aristocratic army officers after 1789 and the outbreak of war in 1792 turned those possibilities into realities. By 1793, Bonaparte had been promoted to captain. The federalist revolt gave him the opportunity to show his talents. His skillful use of artillery at the siege of Toulon won the day for the Convention’s forces and brought him promotion to the rank of general. Augustin Robespierre, a deputy on mission in the area and the younger brother of the Montagnard leader, became his patron. As a result of this association, Napoleon nearly fell victim to the purge that followed the ninth of thermidor and instead remained unemployed until the Convention called on him for help in putting down the counter-revolutionary uprising of the 13 vendémiaire (October 5, 1795). This gained him entry into the Director Barras’s political circle, where he met and hastily married Josephine Beauharnais, the widow of an officer executed during the Terror. As a reward for his services in defeating the vendémiaire uprising, he was given command of France’s most demoralized troops, the Army of Italy.

In the Italian campaign of 1796, Napoleon immediately demonstrated the qualities that were to carry him to glory. Outnumbered by the combined Austrian and Piedmontese forces opposing him, Napoleon succeeded in splitting his foes and defeating them separately. As commander of the French occupation forces in northern Italy, he showed himself an adept politician as well. He stage-managed the creation of carefully controlled sister republics, enriched both himself and the Directory from the levies he raised, and successfully courted the Catholic Church, avoiding the religious conflicts that had dogged the Revolution at home.

After the brumaire coup, Sieyès had intended to give Napoleon a high-sounding title but little real power. Napoleon proved more than a match for Sieyès in the constitutional negotiations. He was unconcerned with most of the document’s details: a constitution, he remarked, should be “short and obscure.” But he insisted that real power, instead of being carefully divided, should be concentrated in the hands of a single person. He accepted those parts of Sieyès’s draft that weakened parliamentary government and sabotaged the electoral principle, but he insisted on the creation of a strong executive body of three consuls. The First Consul was to have much greater powers than his two colleagues; in case of a disagreement among them, his decision would prevail. Once Napoleon’s definition of the First Consul’s role was accepted, it was inevitable that he would be entrusted with the office; no one else had the prestige and popularity to fill it. Two minor political figures were appointed as the other consuls, and Sieyès found himself relegated to the presidency of the largely powerless Senate that he had designed.

The brumaire plotters submitted this hastily drafted Constitution of the Year VIII to the voters for ratification. This plebiscite enabled the new strongman to maintain that he had a popular mandate to govern. Participation was low, however, and officials were told to pad the figures to make them more impressive. Napoleon understood that his position was less secure than it seemed. France was weary of political turmoil and disenchanted with revolutionary ideals; it remained up to him to show that he could do better.

Napoleon’s Consolidation of Power

To consolidate his power, the new First Consul moved quickly to break up the political factions created by the Revolution. He muzzled the political press and used the police

to harass prominent neo-Jacobins and die-hard royalists. But all those political figures between the extremes were welcomed into the system. By choosing collaborators regardless of their attitude to the Revolution, Napoleon did much to defuse the bitter conflicts of the previous decade.

A key feature of the Napoleonic system was the creation of a streamlined system of government that could act swiftly and effectively. The key figures in the administration were the prefects, administrators appointed in Paris and dispatched to the departments to oversee local administration. The prefects bore some resemblance to the pre-revolutionary intendants and to the Directory's commissioners, but they had more extensive powers in the field, while being more strictly controlled from Paris. Thanks to the Revolution, the local institutions that had hampered the intendants no longer existed. The corps of prefects were appointed from Paris and included men drawn from a variety of political backgrounds. They were rotated from post to post after a few years to keep them from developing attachments to local interests, and gave the central government a powerful mechanism for imposing its will on the country. The prefectoral system proved so effective that it still continues today.

The laws the prefects enforced were no longer the result of stormy public legislative debates as they had been during the Revolution. Napoleon concentrated real lawmaking powers in a new body, the *Conseil d'Etat*, or Council of State, which he appointed himself and whose meetings were held in private. To it, Napoleon appointed competent and articulate councilors, drawn—like the prefects—from diverse political camps, and whom he urged to engage in free-wheeling debate. Once he had approved a proposal hammered out in the council, however, public debates were largely a formality. The deputies—divided under Sieyès's complex scheme into a tribunate that debated proposals but could not initiate them, a legislative body that listened to debates and voted without speaking, and a Senate supposedly charged with preventing violations of the constitution—generally accepted the government's proposals.

With the new administrative and lawmaking machinery at his disposal, Napoleon was able to govern more effectively than any previous French ruler. The economic revival that had begun under the Directory continued, benefiting merchants and manufacturers and providing jobs for workers. The establishment of the Bank of France in 1800 made it easier for the government to borrow money and supplied credit for business needs. New gold coins issued in 1803 stabilized the value of France's currency for a century to come. Napoleon reassured the purchasers of the national lands sold under the Revolution that their acquisitions would be protected, even though he allowed many of the émigrés whose estates had been confiscated and sold to return to the country. This "Napoleonic settlement," under which properties and positions attained during the Revolution were guaranteed in exchange for acceptance of his one-man rule, satisfied much of the population. The efficient spy network set up by Joseph Fouché, a former Jacobin terrorist turned minister of police, kept dissidents under surveillance.

Ending the Religious Conflict

To complete his policy of liquidating the conflicts engendered by the Revolution, Napoleon sought to resolve the religious struggle that had begun with the imposition of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in 1790. Napoleon had no firm religious beliefs

of his own; in Egypt, he had made a great show of courting Muslim leaders. But he considered religion a useful instrument of social control and was determined to end the conflict that had grown out of the Revolution's religious reform efforts. His strategy was to go over the heads of the counter-revolutionary French bishops, most of whom had gone into exile during the 1790s, and deal directly with Pope Pius VII, a man who had shown some sympathy for reforms during Napoleon's first occupation of Italy.

Negotiations for a Concordat or treaty between the French government and the papacy were successfully completed in July 1801. The agreement recognized Catholicism as the religion of the majority of the French population and authorized the resumption of public worship. The government would pay priests and bishops; as under the Old Regime, it would nominate bishops, who would receive their consecration from the pope. To end the schism resulting from the Civil Constitution, the pope called on all French bishops, both émigrés and constitutionals who had remained in France, to submit their resignations and appointed a new hierarchy. The church had to accept the permanent loss of its confiscated lands and the legalization of other religions, as well as government control of education and tight regulation of religious orders and charitable activities. To Pius VII and to most French Catholics, the price was acceptable in order to restore regular public worship. Many prominent ex-revolutionaries objected to the Concordat; they blamed Napoleon for abandoning the Revolution's hard-won triumph over what they saw as outmoded superstition. But the majority of the population welcomed the Concordat and the end of the conflict that had begun with the imposition of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

The Protestant and Jewish religious minorities retained the legal protection they had been granted after 1789. In 1806, Napoleon took the extraordinary step of convoking an international congress of Jewish religious leaders to discuss the relationship between French and Jewish law. Together with the granting of citizenship rights to Jewish people in 1791, the meeting of this assembly constituted a remarkable departure in the relations between Jewish people and the world around them. Not even Napoleon's imposition of discriminatory regulations on the Jewish moneylenders of Alsace in 1808 destroyed the impression made by his earlier initiative.

To round out the changes taken to consolidate his regime, in May 1802 Napoleon announced the creation of the Legion of Honor, an award to be given to those who had rendered special service to the nation. Giving special distinctions to certain citizens struck many as a violation of the Revolution's promise of equality, but Napoleon maintained that he was not creating a new privileged class. Membership was not hereditary, and any French citizen could earn the coveted cross. In practice, the Legion became composed primarily of military officers; it served to bind them and the small elite of civilian members to their leader.

The Peace of Amiens and the Saint-Domingue Expedition

In addition to establishing firm control at home, Napoleon also needed to show that he could defend France's international position. Even before the brumaire coup, the French armies had stopped the tide of Coalition victories that had threatened France in early 1799, but France had lost much of the territory gained under the Directory. After the Russians quarreled with their allies and withdrew from the war, Napoleon turned his attention to Austria. His dramatic victory at Marengo in June 1800 and General Moreau's success at Hohenlinden in southern Germany in December 1800

forced the Austrians to accept the treaty of Lunéville, which gave France even greater gains than the 1797 Campo-Formio treaty. In addition to Belgium and Luxembourg, France now annexed the German territories west of the Rhine River that it had occupied since 1795, setting in motion a reshuffling of borders throughout the Holy Roman Empire, as rulers who had lost lands to France received compensation elsewhere. French-dominated authoritarian regimes replaced the Directory's "sister republics" in the Italian peninsula, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

With Austria out of the war, Britain—France's most implacable enemy—made overtures for peace as well. In the treaty signed at Amiens in March 1802, England made a few colonial gains but had to acknowledge France's continental predominance. With this treaty, Napoleon appeared to have brought the ten years of war in Europe to a glorious conclusion. He could boast that revolutionary France had expanded far beyond the limits dreamed of by its Bourbon kings.

The peace of Amiens allowed Napoleon to dream of restoring France's colonies in the Caribbean and using Louisiana, acquired from Spain, as a base for expansion on the American continent. First, however, he had to reassert French authority in Guadeloupe and Saint-Domingue. A military expedition defeated the black population's efforts to defend their freedom in Guadeloupe, but the larger colony of Saint-Domingue proved harder to reconquer. After the National Convention had abolished slavery in 1794, the black commander Toussaint Louverture had used his military and political skills to make himself the virtual ruler of the island. In 1801, he defied Napoleon by issuing his own constitution, bringing the colony to the brink of independence. The French succeeded in landing 20,000 troops in Saint-Domingue in February 1802; Louverture was arrested soon afterward and shipped to France, where he died in prison. A law passed in July 1802 deprived black people living in European France of their citizenship.

Fear of the barely concealed French intention to restore slavery inspired the black population to furious resistance. Disease decimated the French troops, and the resumption of war with England in 1803 cut off reinforcements; in November 1803, the French conceded defeat. The failure of the Saint-Domingue expedition had profound historical consequences. Once he saw that the loss of Saint-Domingue was inevitable, Napoleon realized that he could not hold on to France's claims in North America and offered to sell them to the United States. This "Louisiana Purchase" of 1803 doubled the size of the young American republic and opened the way for its westward expansion. In 1804, Saint-Domingue became the independent nation of Haiti. This first triumph of a non-white population over a European power has remained an inspiration to anticolonial movements for the past two centuries.

One-Man Rule and the Code Napoleon

The Peace of Amiens, the Concordat, and the successful restoration of domestic order brought Napoleon to the height of his popularity despite the loss of Saint-Domingue, which had little effect in France. In 1802, Napoleon modified the constitution to strengthen his power and forestall any opposition. In a plebiscite, more than 3.5 million voters approved of Napoleon being named First Consul for life; only 8,000 negative votes were cast. In 1804, after another plebiscite, the Consulate was transformed into a hereditary Empire.

The promulgation of the Civil Code, often known as the *Code Napoleon*, in 1804, completed Napoleon's program of domestic reforms. Since 1792, France's revolutionary legislators had labored to replace the hundreds of prerevolutionary local law codes with a single national system of civil law. The project, carried to completion at Napoleon's urging, implemented the Revolution's major principles at the level of everyday life. It gave property owners the clear right to use their wealth as they saw fit, eliminating the last vestiges of feudal dues on land and guild restrictions on business. The Code modified the revolutionary inheritance law, which had forced parents to divide their property equally among their children, but maintained the ban on the system of primogeniture, which had consolidated the wealth of noble families. The Code's restrictions on women's rights codified male superiority. The husband had full control of the family's property and the fate of his children. Women who married foreigners lost their French nationality. Divorce was sharply restricted, though not completely abolished, and the husband had greater latitude to start proceedings than the wife. The Civil Code provided a clear and systematic framework for the society of autonomous male individuals and private families that the Revolution had created. With modifications, it remains the basis of French civil law even today.

The Napoleonic Empire

For all of its accomplishments, Napoleon's regime continued to face one central problem: its fate depended entirely on Napoleon's personal authority. By crowning himself emperor in 1804 and making his power hereditary, Napoleon tried to institutionalize his system of one-man rule. But his marriage to Josephine was childless, and it was by no means clear that the country would accept his designated heir as his eventual successor. To maintain his authority, Napoleon felt compelled to be constantly active, reminding the French of his indispensability. When the fragile Peace of Amiens collapsed in 1803 and war resumed, he directed his energies particularly to winning new conquests. In doing so, he took the risk of making the continuation of his own rule dependent on his military successes.

Neither side had been fully satisfied with the 1802 treaty: Napoleon still considered British sea power a threat, and the British were unwilling to accept France's domination of its neighbors and the loss of European markets. But Napoleon lacked any immediate way to strike at the British. Cartoonists imagined French troops crossing the Channel by balloon, but Britain's naval supremacy foiled Napoleon even before Admiral Nelson's crushing victory at Trafalgar in October 1805 permanently ended any hopes for a seaborne invasion.

Britain's ability to defeat France depended on finding allies on the continent to challenge Napoleon's land forces. The obvious candidates were Austria (which had lost both territory and prestige in its previous campaigns against France) and Russia (which had never accepted France's revolutionary conquests). British subsidies helped both nations renew the fight in August 1805.

Napoleon promptly marched the forces he had been training for a possible invasion of England toward the Danube. By this time, he had turned his Grand Army into a fighting machine that combined mobile artillery developed after the Seven Years' War with mass attacks made possible by the size and enthusiasm of the revolutionary citizen armies. Over a decade of campaigning had given him a galaxy of tested generals and a large core of experienced professional soldiers strongly devoted to their commander.

Austerlitz and Jena

At Austerlitz, close to Vienna, Napoleon won perhaps his most celebrated battle, completely crushing the Austrian forces. The Austrians hastened to make peace, ceding even more territory to France and its satellite states. The following year, Prussia, which had remained neutral during the Austerlitz campaign, unexpectedly joined Russia and resumed the fight against Napoleon. At the battles of Jena and Auerstädt, French forces annihilated the famous Prussian army. Napoleon occupied Berlin. The Russians continued the war in 1807, as Napoleon advanced into Poland. At Eylau, in February, the two armies fought to a bloody draw, but in June 1807 Napoleon won a decisive victory at the battle of Friedland. Russia, too, sued for peace.

Napoleon met the young Russian emperor Alexander I personally at Tilsit, in Poland, to conclude a settlement. The Peace of Tilsit in 1807 went well beyond a mere end to hostilities. The charismatic French emperor persuaded Alexander to become his partner in a grand plan by which the two powers would divide Europe and Asia into spheres of influence, and work together to defeat England. With Russia on his side, Napoleon appeared to have achieved total control of the European continent. He had already converted the sister republics established in the Directory period into satellite kingdoms, ruled by members of his family. Prussia and Austria had to accept Napoleon's orders.

Economic Challenge to England

Unable to challenge Britain's naval power directly, Napoleon planned to defeat her through a program of economic warfare that he called the "Continental System." In essence, this amounted to a boycott of trade with Britain, whose rapidly industrializing economy depended on overseas outlets to sell its goods. The Continental System was also aimed at promoting the growth of French industry, which Napoleon hoped would capture the European markets Britain would lose. With his encouragement, cotton-spinning plants sprang up in Paris, which became France's largest industrial center. To replace cane sugar, normally imported from the West Indies, the Napoleonic regime encouraged the planting of sugar beets in northern France and the Belgian departments.

French manufacturers benefited from the hothouse atmosphere of the Continental System, but the port cities—cut off by the British naval blockade—suffered. Those in France itself could do little more than grumble but, in the French-occupied areas, illegal trade with Britain flourished, undermining the boycott and driving authorities to ever harsher measures against the local population. To stop the leaks, Napoleon felt driven to impose tight controls on one territory after another. In 1808, he replaced Spain's Bourbon king with his brother Joseph; this insult to Spanish national pride triggered a guerrilla insurrection, which tied down considerable numbers of French forces. The following year, Napoleon occupied the Papal States in Italy, starting a test of wills with Pius VII that lasted until his downfall. In 1810, Napoleon annexed northern Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy as far south as Rome. The expansion of France's borders raised questions about national identity. Napoleon tried to impose French norms on the annexed territories, installing French prefects and French police and promoting the use of the French language, but these policies inspired the growth of national self-

consciousness among their populations. “The French no longer recognize themselves in the midst of a country that no longer has any natural frontiers, and where the diversity of customs, of faces and of languages has become so great,” one of his own collaborators warned him.¹

The Domestic Scene

The counterpart to Napoleon’s bid for control over Europe was a steady expansion of government authority in France itself. After the declaration of the Empire in 1804, the vestigial powers of the legislature were still further curtailed. Napoleon used the compliant Senate to implement constitutional changes without resorting to the plebiscite mechanism. A law of 1807 formally reinstated press censorship. In 1808, Napoleon created the Imperial University, a bureaucratic arrangement giving the government a monopoly over secondary and higher education throughout the country. Under the Concordat, the church was turned into an instrument of political indoctrination; the Imperial Catechism, issued in 1807, required priests to teach that loyalty to the emperor and military service were religious obligations.

Napoleon’s regime consciously favored the wealthy, including former nobles and middle-class property owners, who were given back unsold property and land confiscated during the Revolution. Determined to prevent the emergence of lower-class protest, Napoleon strengthened employers’ powers over their workforce. An 1803 law required every worker to have a *livret*, or “work book”; workers needed their employer’s signature to change jobs, and, in case of conflicts, the employer’s testimony was to be accepted in court. Workers did have some representation, but not an equal voice, on the *conseils de prud’hommes*, or arbitration panels, set up after 1806 to resolve conflicts between employers and employees. Peasants had fewer complaints about the regime, although they resented its taxes and military conscription. The Napoleonic land settlement guaranteed them continued possession of the land they had obtained during the Revolution. Villagers lost the freedom to choose their local governments, but the regime provided an efficient administrative system that peasants preferred to the seigneurial regime.

Napoleon’s narrow notion of women’s roles was reflected in the Civil Code’s restrictions on their legal rights. He had no interest in promoting women’s education and thought that their only roles should be as wives and mothers. Except among the wealthy, however, women usually did work and, in some cases, they succeeded in resisting male authority. Catholic nurses, allowed to resume their work in hospitals under Napoleon, successfully resisted his effort to make them give up their religious vows. *Cantinières* and *vivandières*, women who accompanied the army to provide services such as washing and repairing clothes and selling food and drinks, enjoyed official recognition.

Art and cultural life were regimented to serve the regime: Jacques Louis David, who had organized republican festivals under the Terror, now devoted himself to huge canvases of Napoleon’s coronation and his military successes. Rather than celebrating liberty and equality, the public festivals of the Napoleonic period marked military victories. To reinforce conservative social values, these ceremonies often included gifts to poor women to enable them to marry. Napoleon set in motion plans to make Paris a monument to his glory. A long, straight boulevard, the *rue de Rivoli*, was to traverse the city, and two arches of triumph were to mark his conquests. To reward his followers, in 1808 Napoleon created a new nobility, handing out titles of baron and count and endowing his favorites with landed estates.

Elements of Opposition

As long as Napoleon marched from victory to victory, there was little visible opposition to him at home. Under the surface, however, there was quiet resistance to the regime's increasing authoritarianism. Small circles of devoted royalists and disgruntled republicans continued to exist. Napoleon could hire artists to glorify him and pamphleteers to praise him, but he was unable to win over the country's major thinkers. The leading members of the rationalist *Idéologue* group that had formed during the Directory period became the hard core of the opposition to him during the Consulate. In 1802, Napoleon had eliminated them from the legislative councils. In 1803, he suppressed their institutional stronghold, the Third Section of the Institute. But he remained uneasily aware of their silent disapproval of the regime.

Napoleon himself thought for a time that he might find support among the thinkers associated with the revival of Catholicism that had begun even before the Concordat. As a result of the controversy over the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the de-Christianizers' attacks on the church, those priests who lacked a real commitment to the faith had left the church. Those who stayed formed a clergy far more serious about its beliefs than most of their prerevolutionary predecessors. The laity's faith had also been renewed. During the Terror, many formerly free-thinking nobles and other victims of persecution had embraced Catholicism, and many of the émigrés had found consolation in religion during their years in exile.

It was an émigré, François René de Chateaubriand, who captured this mood of religious revival in his *Genius of Christianity*. The book appeared in April 1802, coinciding with the first Easter celebration in Paris's Notre-Dame Cathedral since 1793. Chateaubriand's lyrical evocation of religion's aesthetic and emotional appeal made Catholicism fashionable, particularly among the upper classes who had frequently distanced themselves from it before 1789. He and other apologists for religion challenged representatives of the rationalist Enlightenment tradition that had dominated French public life since the time of the *Encyclopédie*.

Chateaubriand marked a break with the Enlightenment not only because of his embrace of Catholicism but also because of his emphasis on the superiority of sentiment and emotion over reason. He was one of the first writers of the French Romantic movement; his novel *René* was one of the first to sound the characteristic Romantic themes of introspection and melancholy. Romanticism was not a monopoly of conservative writers during the Napoleonic period. Liberals frustrated with the stifling of public life during the Empire, such as Benjamin Constant, also wrote novels exploring psychological issues—implicitly suggesting that private life was more important than what went on in the regimented public sphere. Madame de Staël, driven into exile for her liberal views, became France's contact with the lively world of German romanticism, quite different from the regulated intellectual life of Napoleonic Paris. Artists accepted commissions to celebrate Napoleon's victories, but expressed their feelings most fully in more personal works, such as Pierre Paul Prud'hon's subdued portrait of a pensive Empress Josephine or his mythological works on the theme of love.

Like the romantic artists, social thinkers of the period were united only by their distaste for the imperial regime. The thinkers of the *Idéologue* tradition continued to defend the rationalist individualism of the Enlightenment, implicitly condemning the Concordat and the Empire's tight controls on intellectual activity. The economist

Jean-Baptiste Say was a typical representative of this tradition. His *Treatise of Political Economy*, published in 1803, adapted and systematized Adam Smith's doctrines of economic liberty. The latter were in sharp contrast to Napoleon's policies of state intervention.

More original was the conservative Catholic thinker Louis de Bonald. During his years in emigration, this provincial nobleman had elaborated a far-reaching critique of rationalism and individualism, on which he blamed the horrors of the Revolution. He argued that society needed an unquestioned principle of authority, which he found in the Catholic Church. A body of beliefs that had endured for 1,800 years was more reliable than the speculations of modern philosophers, he argued. Society, according to Bonald, was a living organism that needed to be governed by a single head, not an agreement among private individuals. Until France returned to a society in accordance with divine will, with authority flowing from God, through the pope and the king to the aristocracy and finally down to the common people, it would continue to be racked by turmoil. The authoritarian cast of Bonald's doctrines attracted Napoleon, but he could not wean the stubborn marquis away from his loyalty to the Bourbon monarchy.

Other royalists tried more direct means of undermining the Empire, staging several assassination attempts against Napoleon and driving him in 1804 to take a drastic action. French troops invaded neutral Baden to capture the Duc d'Enghien, a Bourbon prince Napoleon thought was implicated in a plan to restore the monarchy. Napoleon had him tried in secret and executed. Even many of the former émigrés who had reconciled themselves with the Napoleonic regime never forgave this direct assault on the Bourbon family. Napoleon's minister Fouché said, with reason, "it is worse than a crime, it's a blunder."

These elements of discontent did not threaten the regime as long as Napoleon could count on military success and economic prosperity. Up to 1810 at least, the war did not weigh too heavily on French society. Napoleon recruited a large proportion of his troops from his non-French territories and his satellite kingdoms. He financed his conquests from tribute levied on his defeated foes. Most of his common soldiers came from the French peasantry and, for many, military service proved to be a road to social mobility. Napoleon's personal hold over his troops remained strong.

The End of the Empire

The year 1810 marked a turning point for Napoleon's regime. The emperor found himself bogged down in a growing number of conflicts that seemed to defy resolution. The "Spanish ulcer," the revolt against French domination that had begun in 1808, ate up increasing numbers of French troops and provided an opening for the British, who landed an expeditionary force under General Wellington in Portugal. Pius VII, placed under arrest on Napoleon's orders, refused to bow to French pressure. Austria made yet another bid to shake off French domination in 1809; although Napoleon's victory at Wagram smashed Vienna's military hopes, he himself was well aware of how thin his forces had been stretched. In 1810, to shore up his ties with the defeated Austrians and in the hope of putting his dynasty on a firmer footing, he divorced the childless Josephine and married an Austrian princess, Marie-Louise, who bore him a son in 1812, seemingly assuring the perpetuation of his dynasty.

Napoleon's rapprochement with Austria failed to solve his mounting problems. The Continental System had begun to unravel; Napoleon himself connived at violations of

it, selling licenses for trade with Britain as a means of raising money. In December 1810, Russia abruptly withdrew from the System and resumed trade with Britain, convincing Napoleon that Alexander intended to turn against him. At home, the year 1810 was marked by the beginning of a sharp economic crisis that persisted into 1811. French manufacturing slumped, and factory owners joined the merchants of the port cities in blaming the regime for their troubles. Peasants showed increasing resentment about the weight of taxes and the growing draft calls needed to keep the army up to strength.

The Russian Campaign

Napoleon responded with his tried-and-true formula, a daring military campaign to silence his foes. But this time his gamble—an invasion of Russia to force Alexander back into the Continental System—failed. He advanced as far as Moscow, but could not destroy the Russian army. Napoleon finally had to begin a retreat in the harsh Russian winter. Cold, hunger, and Russian harassment decimated his troops; less than one-tenth of the men who had set off for Moscow returned. In Paris, conspirators spread the rumor that Napoleon himself had been killed in Russia. In the hours of confusion caused by the coup attempt, Napoleon's top officials failed to put into effect plans to declare his infant son emperor, revealing how shaky the regime's support had become.

Even after the defeat in Russia, Napoleon still thought that his own military genius and the potential divisions among his foes would allow him to reverse the situation. He pulled together a new army, made up mostly of raw recruits and men previously rejected as unfit, but he was unable to prevent first Prussia and then Austria from joining forces with the Russians. In October 1813, the combined allied forces defeated him at the battle of Leipzig, and Napoleon had to retreat across the Rhine. Meanwhile, British and Spanish forces under the Duke of Wellington advanced toward the Pyrénées. As the enemy forces penetrated into France in the winter of 1814, Napoleon fought a brilliant rearguard campaign, but he was hopelessly outnumbered. The French population, whose patriotism had enabled the revolutionary armies to fight off invaders in 1792 and 1793, now refused to heed Napoleon's summons to rise to the nation's defense. For too long, he had smothered all real participation in public affairs. At the end of March 1814, allied forces reached Paris.

Although military defeat was now certain, it was not clear that the Napoleonic regime would also fall. Royalist conspirators' efforts to set off demonstrations in favor of a Bourbon restoration enjoyed only limited success, and the victorious allies wanted to be sure that France had a stable government that would not be totally dependent on them for support. The Napoleonic regime's fate was sealed by Napoleon's own top officials, led by his foreign minister, Talleyrand. Determined to keep their own positions, they prepared to reinstate the Bourbons, but on their own terms. Louis XVI's long-exiled brother would be put on the throne, but he would have to accept a written constitution limiting his power and maintaining the principal features of the "Napoleonic settlement." Those who had obtained high governmental positions under Napoleon would keep them, and purchasers of church and émigré property would not be disturbed. Talleyrand, who had served every successive French government since the Old Regime, and the much-feared police minister Fouché retained their offices.

Napoleon, betrayed by his own ministers and warned by his generals that the army would not continue the fight, abdicated his throne on April 6, 1814. The victorious

allies allowed him to retire as ruler of the island of Elba off the coast of Italy. His departure brought to an end an extraordinary 25 years of French history. In one respect, 1814 really did mark the end of an era. For nearly two centuries, France had threatened to dominate the European continent through its military might. The revolutionary and Napoleonic armies had come closer than any of their predecessors to conquering all of Europe. But Napoleon's defeat ended the possibility that France might achieve lasting control over its neighbors.

In domestic affairs, however, Napoleon's fall left more uncertainties than answers. Would the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy mean a full-fledged restoration of the Old Regime, with its privileged classes and its state-imposed religion? If not, which aspects of the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods would be incorporated into the new system?

Note

- 1 Cited in Patrick Boucheron, ed., *Histoire Mondiale de la France* (Paris: Seuil, 2018), 598.

10 The Restoration

France in 1814

With Napoleon's defeat in 1814, the 25-year cycle of political upheavals that had begun in 1789 seemed to have returned to its starting point. A Bourbon prince, the closest male heir of Louis XVI, supported by loyal nobles who had refused to accept Napoleon's regime, restored the monarchy. The dream of a return to the hierarchical society of the past, harbored by counter-revolutionary intellectuals and by many of those who had lost positions or property after 1789, did not appear completely impossible. In reality, however, as even the newly installed Louis XVIII realized, the Revolution had caused too many changes to permit a simple return to the former status quo.

The Return of the Bourbons and the Hundred Days

Louis XVIII did not owe his restoration to a broad popular movement. His return was arranged by a small group of politicians and a small band of devoted royalists, and was accepted by the victorious allies in the hope that it would give France a stable government that could be depended on not to provoke another European war. Hasty negotiations produced a constitutional document, called the *Charte*, or "charter," to avoid the use of the word *constitution*, with its revolutionary connotations. The king asserted that he had granted the *Charte* of his own free will; he rejected the doctrine of popular sovereignty. Its provisions, however, reflected the impact of the Revolution. The *Charte* made France a limited monarchy, with the king sharing power with a bicameral legislature consisting of a hereditary Chamber of Peers and an elected Chamber of Deputies. Voting eligibility was restricted to the wealthy, a group of perhaps 100,000, but this group included many members of the bourgeoisie who had enriched themselves during the Revolution. The special privileges of the hereditary nobility were not restored, and the highly centralized Napoleonic administrative system remained in place.

To the die-hard émigrés and royalists who had hoped that Louis XVIII would truly bring back the pre-revolutionary order, the *Charte* was a disappointment. It maintained the basic features of liberalism, such as legal equality of all citizens, religious freedom for Protestants and Jewish people, and freedom of the press, subject to certain controls. Louis XVIII upheld the Napoleonic land settlement, promising that property acquired since 1789 would be secure and thereby dashing émigrés' hopes of regaining their confiscated estates. He also vowed not to inflict reprisals on anyone for political actions during the Revolution. His ministerial

cabinet included Talleyrand and Fouché, both of whom had voted for the execution of his brother in 1793. But the new regime did not really satisfy former revolutionaries and supporters of Napoleon either. A population now imbued with the nationalist sentiments generated by the Revolution and Napoleon had little respect for a king who had arrived in France “in the baggage wagons of foreign armies,” as a common phrase put it. The new regime’s ostentatious support for the Catholic Church irritated those who had come to regard freedom of conscience as a key value. In May 1814, at the peace conference assembled at Vienna, Talleyrand agreed that France would return to its borders as they existed at the start of the war in 1792, giving up almost all of the territorial gains for which its armies had fought. Massive layoffs in the army and the bureaucracy created a large pool of discontent.

The Hundred Days

Events quickly demonstrated the shakiness of this First Restoration. In March 1815, encouraged by reports of unrest in France, Napoleon eluded his guards and sailed from Elba to the southern French coast. With a handful of followers, he set out for Paris. Troops sent to capture him went over to the side of their former commander, and crowds cheered the emperor as he neared the capital. Louis XVIII, who had initially promised to die rather than abandon his throne, prudently changed his mind and departed for Belgium. On March 20, 1815, Napoleon entered Paris unopposed. Aware that his own authoritarian regime no longer had much support, Napoleon proclaimed that his restored Empire would be different. He issued amendments to the Constitution that guaranteed basic political freedoms. His gesture won over some leading liberals, such as the writer Benjamin Constant, who had formerly opposed him.

Napoleon’s chances for success depended as much on the reaction of the allied coalition that had defeated him in 1814 as on his ability to find support at home. As the allies scrambled to gather their forces, Napoleon marched into Belgium, hoping to win a quick victory that would compel them to accept his return. There, at Waterloo, allied forces under the British commander Wellington ended the saga of the Hundred Days on June 18, 1815. Rather than pursue a hopeless campaign, Napoleon surrendered to the British, who dispatched him to the remote South Atlantic island of Saint Helena, too far away from France to stage another escape; he died there in 1821. The Hundred Days was not just another dramatic chapter added to the Napoleonic legend, however. Napoleon’s easy success in toppling Louis XVIII was a lasting reminder of the Restoration’s lack of genuine popular support.

The Consolidation of Constitutional Monarchy

With Napoleon finally out of the way, Louis XVIII returned to Paris, inaugurating the “Second Restoration.” The king took advantage of the opportunity to punish former revolutionaries who had supported Napoleon during his brief return. Many of the Convention deputies who had been pardoned for voting to execute Louis XVI were now forced into exile, and the popular General Ney, who had joined Napoleon’s forces, was executed. In southern France, the settling of political accounts turned violent, as royalist gangs murdered former republicans in a “white Terror.”

Louis XVIII modified the *Charte* to make it somewhat more authoritarian. Well aware of the weakness of his regime, however, he did not touch the fundamental features of this compromise with the Revolution. The Restoration government remained an uneasy hybrid of liberal and counter-revolutionary principles.

Ironically, the enduring political institution consolidated by the Second Restoration was not the monarchy, but the practice of parliamentary government that so many enthusiasts for the Bourbons initially condemned as a vestige of the Revolution. The trend toward the strengthening of parliamentary institutions first emerged when the royalists, who criticized the king for being too tolerant toward supporters of the Revolution and Napoleon, won an unexpected victory in the legislative elections of October 1815. Stunned by this unexpected victory for royalist principles so soon after the monarchy's humiliating collapse, Louis XVIII dubbed the legislature the *chambre introuvable*, the "unimaginable Chamber," an ambiguous label that suggested his mixed feelings about its leaders' intransigence. In the face of the *chambre introuvable*, however, he could hardly keep former revolutionaries like Talleyrand and Fouché as ministers. The *Ultras* thus imposed the principle that the ministry had to take account of the legislative balance of power. The new ministry, it is true, still reflected the king's caution more than the *Ultras'* zeal. Although it was headed by an émigré noble, the duc de Richelieu, its dominant figure was a young official of the Napoleonic regime, Elie Decazes. Decazes, who had become the king's personal favorite, was determined to steer a middle course between the *Ultras* and beneficiaries of the "Napoleonic settlement." In the Chamber, a group of deputies known as *Doctrinaires* provided the strongest support for this middle course. The most prominent of the *Doctrinaires*, Pierre Paul Royer-Collard, articulated a theoretical justification for the *Charte*, saying that, by giving both the king and the legislature real powers, it provided a balance of power that would guarantee individual civil rights and political stability. Although women were excluded from the public politics of the Restoration period, well-connected salon hostesses and figures such as Richelieu's sister, Madame de Montcalm, helped make the parliamentary system function by establishing informal connections between men from rival factions.

Decazes's policies and the *Doctrinaires'* ideas were challenged from both the right and the left. The *Ultras* denounced any compromise with the principles that had governed the French Revolution. *Ultra* spokesman Louis de Bonald insisted that it was necessary to replace talk of the "rights of man" with an emphasis on the "rights of God," and to restore the power of the Catholic Church. Liberals like Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël replied that the events of the French Revolution did not discredit the ideals of individual freedom and representative government. Constant sought to ward off the claim that the doctrine of natural rights led inevitably to the dictatorial democracy of the Jacobins by asserting that freedom in modern societies really meant "the security to pursue private interests" and that this security was best guaranteed for all citizens when political functions were exercised by a wealthy elite within a constitutional system.¹ He criticized the *Doctrinaires* for following a policy of pure pragmatism and separating themselves from the positive aspects of the revolutionary heritage. The Restoration years thus saw the articulation of clearly defined doctrines of conservatism and liberalism.

Parliamentary elections in the years after 1815 showed that Louis XVIII's skepticism about the political strength of the *Ultras* had been justified. The *chambre introuvable* was dissolved in September 1816, and the electors returned a much less

intransigent group of deputies. By 1817, an outspoken liberal opposition determined to defend many of the basic principles of 1789 had gained a number of legislative seats. Its leaders included prominent former revolutionaries such as Lafayette. The middle course steered by Decazes and the *Doctrinaires* seemed to be the safest path for the government, which succeeded in convincing the allied powers to withdraw their occupying troops as scheduled in 1818, returning France to full sovereignty over its own affairs.

The Ultras in Power

The assassination in February 1820 of the Louis XVIII's nephew the duc de Berry, the presumptive heir to the throne, opened a crisis that brought down Decazes and his compromise policy. Enraged royalists blamed the government for not dealing more firmly with the enemies of the monarchy. Even the discovery that the duchesse de Berry had become pregnant before her husband's death and that the Bourbon line had escaped extinction did not calm their fury. When the government sought to appease the Ultras by revising the election laws in June 1820 to reduce the liberals' chances, it drove the leftwing opposition to resort to underground political conspiracy. A network of activists, known as the Carbonari after a similar subversive group in Italy, brought together ex-revolutionaries with young students and discontented military officers. The Ultras complained that the government was not doing enough to combat subversion. At the end of 1821, the king finally decided to appoint a minister who had the Ultras' confidence, a provincial nobleman named Joseph Villèle.

The conservative Villèle proved in many ways the most capable of the Restoration's politicians. Backed by a strong majority in the Chamber, Villèle gave France such a successful experience of parliamentary government that he inadvertently weakened the claim that only a king with broad powers could govern the country. Domestically, he concentrated particularly on putting the government's finances in order, avoiding the fiscal irresponsibility that had doomed the Old Regime. Determined to show that France was once again a major European power, Villèle sent troops to put down a liberal revolt against the Spanish monarchy in 1823. Where Napoleon's army had bogged down in a bloody guerrilla war, the Restoration's troops achieved an easy success. In 1824, Villèle pushed through a law to compensate former nobles for property confiscated from them during the Revolution. This "milliard [billion] for the émigrés" stirred up angry protests, but it ended any doubts about the permanence of the revolutionary land settlement. In 1825, Villèle recognized the independence of Haiti, France's former colony of Saint-Domingue, in exchange for an indemnity to former plantation owners. This settlement imposed a heavy burden on Haiti, but it allowed the country to obtain international recognition of its status.

Charles X

Louis XVIII's death in 1824 brought his brother to the throne as Charles X. During his years in exile, Louis XVIII had become cautious and open to compromise; his brother had become more intransigent and devoted to Catholicism. On ascending the throne, he immediately challenged liberals and moderates by reviving the elaborate coronation ceremonies at Reims cathedral, which Louis XVIII had omitted for fear of being seen as

trying to bring back the past. Even as Villèle was showing that monarchy and parliamentary government were not incompatible, Charles X continued to regard the *Charte* as an unacceptable limitation of his powers. His attitude encouraged the *Ultra* party to demand legislation that widened the gap between former supporters and former opponents of the Revolution.

Many of the *Ultras'* pet measures provoked increased opposition to the regime. A law authorizing the death penalty for desecration of Catholic churches outraged liberals, who also objected to the church's growing influence on the schools. A strict censorship law proposed in 1827 seemed designed to silence opposition to the *Ultras*. The government lost badly in the 1827 parliamentary elections, opposed both by the liberals and by dissident royalists grouped around the famous author Chateaubriand, whom Villèle had dismissed from the ministry in 1824. Charles X reluctantly replaced Villèle with a moderate, the vicomte de Martignac. Lacking real support from either the king or the Chamber, Martignac achieved little. With an electorate unwilling to tolerate any more concessions to the *Ultras* and the church, and a king unwilling to accept a prime minister representative of the Chamber, the Restoration political compromise was rapidly unraveling.

Postrevolutionary France

In the Countryside

Napoleon's downfall left an unstable political situation, but it ushered in a period of relative stability in social and economic life. Despite Napoleon's efforts to encourage manufacturing, France in 1815 and for many years afterward remained a primarily agricultural country. The sale of national lands, begun under the Revolution, had continued throughout the Napoleonic period. Although the initial sales had benefited well-to-do bourgeois buyers, these purchasers had frequently divided their new properties and resold them to peasants. The revolutionary inheritance laws, which dictated the equal division of property among heirs, furthered the tendency toward the multiplication of small peasant landholdings already evident in the eighteenth century. This ensured that France would not follow the example of England, where enclosure laws had allowed large landowners to force small farmers out of business. Gradual improvements in agricultural productivity continued sufficiently to keep pace with a still-growing population. In many respects, rural life—still the life of the vast majority of France's population—remained much as it had been before the Revolution well into the nineteenth century.

Population trends underlined the continued vitality of France's peasant economy. The overall birth rate had begun to fall during the Revolution, indicating that even peasant families were beginning to adopt some birth control practices. But the population had continued to grow as the large cohort of men and women born in the decades before 1789 had married and completed their families. Throughout the Restoration, population growth remained fairly evenly distributed across the country. There was no large-scale migration from the countryside to the towns. France's rural population reached an all-time peak in the 1830s and 1840s. Revolutionary reforms had eliminated some of the most resented seigneurial rights and given peasants more legal protections. In retrospect, the Restoration years were the high point for traditional peasant agriculture.

Manufacturing

France's manufacturers had been more severely affected by the turmoil of the revolutionary period than her farmers. Even the consolidation of Napoleon's regime had not fully restored favorable conditions. Each new episode of war had disrupted economic life severely, and the collapse of the Continental System had exposed industrialists to competition from British rivals who had gained a long lead in adopting new methods while France had been in turmoil. After 1815, assured of peace and protected by a high wall of tariffs aimed at keeping British goods out, manufacturers of textiles, metal goods, and other products could plan investments with greater security. Throughout the period, the government made modest efforts to encourage the growth of industry. It maintained a stable currency and, blissfully unaware of the impending arrival of the railroad era, invested in a network of canals meant to improve transportation and broaden markets.

Like French farmers, however, French manufacturers continued to rely primarily on traditional methods. Tariff protection meant that they did not have to invest in the new, efficient power-driven machinery that British industrialists had begun to adopt. A particularly marked business downturn after 1827 inspired middle-class dissatisfaction with Charles X's government.

Culture and Religion

Intellectual and cultural life presented a very different spectacle from the slow evolution of population, agriculture, and manufacturing. The Napoleonic regime had imposed a stifling conformity on writers and artists; the Restoration, despite the maintenance of some restrictions, permitted lively debate. Intellectuals of all persuasions meditated on the significance of the country's dramatic experiences since 1789 and shared a conviction that ideas were of decisive importance in national life. The *Ultras* and the governments of the period made cultural issues central by their insistence on a symbolic restoration of the role of religion in public life.

Napoleon's Concordat of 1801 had permitted the resumption of religious life, but his regime had kept the church under strict control. Although the first Restoration monarch, Louis XVIII, retained his eighteenth-century Voltairean skepticism about religion, the *Ultra* party made promotion of the faith a central part of its program. Initially, they campaigned against the Concordat, which restricted church activities, and were disappointed when Louis XVIII's ministers decided to maintain its controls over the clergy. Spokesmen for militant Catholicism, like the intense young Breton priest Félicité de Lamennais, made vehement arguments in favor of a society built on traditional religious values. Lamennais argued that the only answer to the ideological chaos left by the Revolution was adherence to a dogmatic creed enforced by an authoritarian church. He and the other Catholic apologists of the period abandoned the Gallican tradition of independence from papal authority and exalted the pope's powers.

The revival of Catholicism found a genuine echo in some parts of French society. Catholic preachers, adopting revivalist techniques first seen in the "Great Awakening" movement in the United States after 1800, held 1,500 meetings between 1815 and 1830 that inspired at least a temporary return to religious observance. Religious monuments destroyed during the Revolution were restored, new ones were erected, and public celebration of religious holidays resumed. Especially after Charles X came to the throne

in 1824, church influence in the educational system increased. Bishop Denis Frayssinous, Grand Master of the university system from 1824 to 1828, was particularly assiduous in combing out irreligious professors and trying to replace them with believers. By 1825, Catholic educational efforts began to produce a noticeable upswing in ordinations to the priesthood.

Although the reinvigoration of Catholic faith under the Restoration was unmistakable, the Church's vehement condemnation of everything that had happened during the Revolution and the Napoleonic period limited its ability to reach much of the population. Restoration government officials worried that the priests' attacks on purchasers of former church lands and on soldiers who had served in the Napoleonic armies would cause unrest. Freethinkers countered religious revivals by sponsoring productions of the seventeenth-century playwright Molière's *Tartuffe*, which condemned religious zealots as hypocrites. Publishers flooded the market with inexpensive editions of the leading Enlightenment writers, such as Voltaire, with special emphasis on their polemics against traditional Christianity. Liberal politicians campaigned against the insidious influence of the Congregation of the Faith—a shadowy Catholic organization accused of secretly influencing government policy—and against the government's toleration of unauthorized Catholic seminaries forbidden under the Concordat. The religious quarrel that had been so bitter during the Revolution thus was revived in a new form under the Restoration.

In addition to reviving the church, the Restoration government undertook the task of expunging the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period from national memory. Open references to these dramatic periods of the recent past were censored, and possession of such symbols as the tricolor flag—replaced during the Restoration by the Bourbons' white banner—was made illegal. Given the number of people who had participated in the Revolution and the Napoleonic regime, however, such efforts could not succeed. The 1820s saw the beginning of a “memoir boom” as publishers competed to put out the recollections of public figures from these periods, and the young liberal writer Adolphe Thiers's *History of the French Revolution* became a best-seller. The funerals of former revolutionaries and Napoleonic officers allowed supporters of those regimes to make public demonstrations of their loyalties. The myth of the Revolution—whether it was seen as a model to be reenacted in the future or as a destructive cataclysm that needed to be warded off—as well as the memory of Napoleonic glory lived on as major features of French culture, as did the conviction that these experiences made France unique and gave its history a universal significance.

The Romantic Movement

In the early years of the Restoration, the cause of monarchical and religious revival had attracted the enthusiasm of many young students and intellectuals. One was the teenaged Victor Hugo, soon to become the leading representative of the romantic literary movement in France. Hugo and his peers, born during the Revolution and schooled in the regimented atmosphere of the Empire, welcomed the Restoration as a promise of freedom. Hugo won his first literary prize for poems celebrating the glories of the old French monarchy. But as the regime quickly moved to substitute a rigid religious doctrine for the authoritarianism of the Empire, France's leading young thinkers turned against it. When the government banned the popular, philosophy professor Victor Cousin's public lectures after the assassination of the duc de Berry in 1820, it

opened an irreparable rift between itself and the new intellectual and artistic elite that had grown up since the Revolution.

Although they now joined older liberal spokesmen like Benjamin Constant and Lafayette in opposition to the regime, these younger men did not adopt the rationalist philosophy of the Enlightenment. The most eloquent, like Hugo and the poet Alphonse de Lamartine, identified themselves with romanticism and its wholehearted embrace of the emotions. By the early 1820s, the romantic spirit had made significant inroads into French culture. Walter Scott's historical novels enjoyed great popularity in French translation. Claire du Duras's *Ourika*, the story of a young black woman raised in France who realizes that her race has made her a permanent outsider, gave the common Romantic theme of alienation a new resonance. Eugène Delacroix, whose paintings translated the Romantic spirit into visual art, produced canvases glorifying the Greek revolt against Turkey in the late 1820s, a cause that the Romantics saw as a heroic struggle for freedom. His *Death of Sardanapalus*, exhibited in 1828, contained a disturbing mixture of sensuality and cruelty that was alien to classical sensibilities. Though it had no immediate reference to politics, it was most emphatically a painting meant to shock conventional opinion.

The Revolution of 1830

The animated debates of the Restoration period might not have posed a real threat to political stability if a government open to compromise had been in power. However, Charles X listened to advisors who steered him toward political and ideological confrontation. In August of 1829, he dismissed the cautious Martignac and appointed a ministry of die-hard *Ultras* headed by Jules de Polignac, son of one of Marie-Antoinette's favorites and a man whose very name recalled the most discredited aspects of the Old Regime.

The Polignac ministry seemed to be bent on altering the constitution to avoid bowing to the majority in the Chamber. But in fact it took no decisive action for more than half a year. Polignac's only major initiative was to send French troops to occupy the coast of Algeria. The invasion of Algeria marked the beginning of a new epoch of French imperial expansion that would continue throughout the nineteenth century, but it did nothing to boost the regime's popularity. The Polignac ministry's hesitancy gave its opponents ample opportunity to prepare themselves for a confrontation. Since 1827, the historian and liberal leader François Guizot had organized liberal political efforts under the banner of a society called *Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera* ("God helps those who help themselves"). His group had assured the election of a large block of liberal deputies in 1827 and, when 221 deputies rejected the Polignac ministry in March 1830 and Charles X used his power of dissolution to force new elections, Guizot's society went to work again. Backed by a number of newspapers, not only were the "221" reelected, but the liberals also picked up another 50 seats.

Rather than bow to the will of the voters, Charles X's ministers reacted by preparing a set of ordinances to muzzle the press and to alter the voting laws in such a way as to guarantee victory for their party. The regime's liberal opponents were prepared to fight back. As soon as the "July Ordinances" were posted on the morning of July 26, 1830, the young Adolphe Thiers (who was beginning what would prove to be a long career as one of nineteenth-century France's most important politicians) organized a journalists' protest against violation of the *Charte*. The protest was published in several papers

despite the new censorship laws. Leading liberal parliamentary deputies, including Guizot and the banker Casimir Périer, hoped that this moral appeal would be sufficient to thwart the ministry's plans and force it to resign. These men, solid members of France's social and political establishment, had no interest in triggering a revolution aimed at toppling the Bourbon monarchy. But they were willing to risk a crisis in order to maintain the system of parliamentary government.

By the second day of the crisis, events began to escape the liberal leaders' control. Many Paris employers closed their shops, leaving their workers to congregate in the streets, where agitators stirred them to defend the cause of liberty. By the evening of July 27, a popular insurrection was under way, as barricades were thrown up in many neighborhoods. The troops ordered to put down the unrest were, in many cases, more in sympathy with the rebels than with the government. After three days of street fighting, the "Three Glorious Days," Charles X abandoned the struggle. Rather than risk the fate of his older brother, Louis XVI, he fled to England. His departure marked not only the end of his reign but of the Restoration itself. Power now lay with the liberal politicians who had sparked resistance to the July ordinances and with the popular crowds who had battled the king's troops.

Note

- 1 Constant, *De la Liberté Chez les Modernes* (Paris: Livre du Poche, 1980), 502.

11 The July Monarchy and Its Critics

Because it was brief and relatively bloodless, and because the constitutional regime that replaced the Restoration closely resembled its predecessor, the Revolution of 1830 has often been classed as a minor episode in nineteenth-century French history, less dramatic and less significant than the revolutions of 1789 or 1848. In reality, the “Three Glorious Days” were only one episode in a broader revolutionary cycle. The social and political unrest that had surfaced in the late 1820s remained strong for several years after Charles X’s flight. Until 1835, there seemed to be a real possibility that the constitutional-monarchist regime precariously installed in power in July 1830 would fall to a more radical replacement, as had the constitutional monarchy created in 1789. Even though this did not happen, the Revolution of 1830 allowed a permanent expansion of France’s sphere of public debate that focused on new issues, such as industrialism, social problems, and the “woman question.” The political “families” of liberals, radicals, socialists, and conservatives that would dominate French political life well into the twentieth century took shape. These changes coincided with a new period in the history of the French economy, symbolized by the appearance of the railroad, a product of the technology of the industrial age that was in itself a major agent of change. Increasingly, 1830 has come to strike historians as one of the major milestones in modern French history.

The Bourgeois Monarchy and Its Foes

Romantic artist Eugène Delacroix’s famous painting of the Revolution of 1830, *Liberty Leading the People*, dramatically captures the ambiguity of the events that toppled the Bourbon Restoration in July 1830. The bare-breasted female figure in the center of the composition wears the red cap of liberty, recalling the radical Jacobin republic first proclaimed in 1792. But she holds aloft the tricolor flag, a banner symbolizing national pride that united liberals, whose ideal was the moderate Revolution of 1789, with admirers of Napoleon. Liberty is flanked by three armed insurrectionists: a man dressed in the costume of a respectable bourgeois (whose top hat remains firmly in place even as he surveys the insurrectionary barricade), a worker brandishing a cutlass, and a child waving pistols in both hands—who can be seen as a symbol either of youth and energy or of the violence the Revolution threatened to unleash. As Delacroix’s composition suggested, the revolutionary movement enjoyed support from members of both the middle and lower classes, and from the young, but it was by no means clear that all participants in the movement were fighting for the same thing.

The liberal deputies and journalists who had taken the lead in denouncing the July ordinances were mostly concerned with bringing the revolutionary interlude to a close before events got out of hand. Led by Adolphe Thiers, most of them quickly rallied to the support of a new monarch who would accept the principles of constitutional and parliamentary government wholeheartedly. Their candidate for the throne was Louis-Philippe, the duc d'Orléans, head of a younger branch of the Bourbon family. Louis-Philippe had served with the revolutionary army in 1792 and had only emigrated during the Terror. He had returned to France during the Restoration and lived quietly until 1830. Thiers drafted a widely circulated proclamation touting Louis-Philippe as a "citizen king," whose rule would save the country from the divisions that any attempt to install a republic was bound to cause. The aged General Lafayette, one of the great names of 1789 and a leader of the republican movement during the Restoration, gave the Orléanist solution his support, defusing radical opposition.

The Chamber of Deputies hastily revised the constitution, and on August 9, 1830, Louis-Philippe was officially installed as king. Whereas Louis XVIII and Charles X insisted that they had granted a constitution of their own free will, Louis-Philippe accepted the principle of national sovereignty. He also restored the tricolor as the national flag, replacing the white banner of the Bourbons that Louis XVIII had brought back in 1814. The Orléanist solution appeared to satisfy the demands that the leaders of the French Revolution had made in 1789. After more than 40 years of political conflict, France would now be a constitutional monarchy, similar in many ways to its British neighbor.

The Regime's Opponents

Although the "July Monarchy" created by the Revolution of 1830 appeared to middle-class liberals as an ideal solution to the nation's needs, it left many other groups unsatisfied. On the right, a legitimist opposition refused to acknowledge the new dynasty and retained its loyalty to Charles X's young grandson, who was proclaimed heir to the throne after Charles X officially abdicated. The legitimists remained loyal to an intransigent Catholicism and continued to denounce the whole panoply of liberal institutions. In many rural areas, legitimist landowners, often allied with conservative clergy, dominated local politics and harassed July Monarchy officials.

In Paris, republican activists had been in the forefront of the street fighting during the "Three Glorious Days." Louis-Philippe's elevation to the throne and the limited revision of the *Charte*, which extended the right to vote only to wealthy members of the middle classes (the electorate was only enlarged from 90,000 to 166,000 voters in 1831), struck them as a betrayal. Republican idealists also criticized the new government for refusing to extend aid to revolutionary movements that broke out in Poland and Italy after the French uprising. The main republican organization, the Society of the Rights of Man, made a special effort to broaden the base of the movement by winning followers among the workers of France's major cities. Popular republicanism was often mixed with nostalgia for Napoleon. Among the lower classes, Napoleon's authoritarianism was forgotten. He was remembered for having made France respected throughout Europe and for providing opportunities for commoners.

The republicans took advantage of the lifting of the Restoration's rigorous press laws, notably in the realm of political caricature. The satirist Charles Philipon's depiction of the fat-cheeked Louis-Philippe as a pear (a slang term for "dimwit")

created an image the regime never managed to shake off. Philipon's young associate, Honoré Daumier, often considered the greatest genius in the history of political cartooning, skewered the regime's legislature with his drawing of "The Legislative Belly," showing well-known politicians yawning and gossiping in the Chamber. The well-fed but obviously incompetent deputies stood condemned as a selfish elite running public affairs in their own interests.

Popular movements in many parts of the country encouraged republican hopes that the 1830 Revolution might take a radical turn. In rural areas, outbreaks of violence had become increasingly common toward the end of the 1820s. Many of them were directed against the new forest code introduced in 1827. It had put an end to traditional rights that peasants had to exploit wooded areas and marked a widening of liberal notions of property rights. In urban areas, workers and artisans were primed to protest because of the economic depression that had gripped the country since 1827. In the textile center of Rouen, workers responded to the news from Paris by demonstrating against the introduction of new machinery that threatened their jobs and new work rules that gave employers more control over the production process. The slogan adopted by insurgent Lyon silk workers in 1831—"Live working or die fighting"—dramatized the intensity of the emerging social problem: the difficulty of providing urban workers with a good life in the framework of a liberal economy.



Figure 11.1 The Legislative Belly

France's greatest political cartoonist, Honoré Daumier, summed up the radical view of the July Monarchy in this famous image from the 1830s, "The Legislative Belly." The mass of the French population, Daumier implied, had little in common with the aged and overfed ministers and deputies he caricatured so cruelly. (© Artokoloro Quint Lox Limited/Alamy Stock Photo)

Popular dissatisfaction also surfaced in the form of attacks against the church. The clerical hierarchy had identified itself so strongly with the Bourbon monarchy that it inevitably became a target after the Revolution. In February 1831, Parisian rioters, angered by a church service in memory of the Bourbon duc de Berry, sacked the palace of the archbishop. The new regime, quick to put down workers' protests, showed less zeal about protecting the church. The wave of anticlerical protests suggested that the Revolution might indeed take on a more radical character.

The cholera epidemic that struck France in 1831 to 1832 added to the atmosphere of fear and instability that had persisted since the July Revolution. Among its victims was the banker and prime minister Casimir Périer, a forceful leader with broad parliamentary support who might have dealt more effectively with the regime's problems than his successors. Attacked from the right and the left, beset by social protest, and bereft of popular leaders, the July Monarchy's future looked uncertain at best.

Prophetic Voices

The early 1830s were crucial years for the development of socialism, feminism, and new notions about the place of religion in society. Socialist ideas had begun to develop in France during the Restoration. Henri de Saint-Simon, an eccentric former nobleman of the prerevolutionary generation, had attracted a following of young people in the 1820s. Saint-Simon preached the need for an organic, communitarian society in which all would work together for the common good, instead of pursuing selfish individual interests. He looked to progress in science and technology to bring about a better world, and envisioned a society organized by a priesthood of dedicated engineers and technologists, who would replace the unproductive elite of politicians and aristocrats who governed Restoration France. Saint-Simon's teachings spoke powerfully to many intelligent and restless young people dissatisfied with the society they saw around them, and eager to devote themselves to improving the world.

Saint-Simon died in 1825, but his circle of young disciples continued to meet and elaborate his doctrines, especially the anti-individualistic "new Christianity" that Saint-Simon had begun to propagate toward the end of his life. The movement came under the leadership of Prosper Enfantin, a charismatic young man who built up a quasi-religious cult around himself, but who also encouraged discussion of radical new ideas about sexual morality and gender roles. Enfantin himself had few original ideas, but the Saint-Simonian circle continued to attract many of the brightest young men and women in Paris.

The Saint-Simonians were pioneers in asserting that women had a positive role to play in the transformation of society, and in criticizing the effect of the monogamous bourgeois family on women's lives. By 1831, Enfantin had appointed several women to significant positions in the Saint-Simonian hierarchy. In 1832, when he changed his policy and demoted them, frustrated female members of the movement broke away and founded the first all-women's feminist group in French history. In their journal, *La Femme libre* (*The Liberated Woman*), Pauline Roland and others proclaimed that the liberation of women and the redemption of the working class had to go together. They developed the Saint-Simonian challenge to the monogamous family from a feminist perspective, putting forward arguments to liberate women from the control of husbands by allowing free love and communal childrearing.

In 1832, Enfantin and a number of his followers, who had formed a commune to practice the movement's ideas about free love and collective living, were prosecuted for outraging public morals. The highly publicized trial broke up the movement; many of its young adherents disavowed their leader and his more radical doctrines. Enfantin and a few faithful loyalists contributed to the breakup of the movement by leaving for Egypt to search for a "female Messiah" who was to share the leadership of the movement and usher in a new age for humanity. Their quest made the movement an easy target for ridicule, and Saint-Simonianism as an organized force disintegrated. The impact of its teachings about the need for social harmony and the importance of an organized approach to economic development remained alive in the minds of former members, however, influencing French public life down to the time of the Second Empire and beyond.

The feminist group associated with *La Femme libre* also faded out after 1834. Its leading members were overwhelmed by the difficulties of supporting themselves as working women. Some came to question the practicality of abolishing marriage if it meant leaving mothers with the burden of supporting themselves and their children. A more middle-class publication, the *Gazette des Femmes*, founded in 1836, campaigned for changes in the legal system rather than questioning the institution of marriage. The only women who seemed able to live out the feminist dream of choosing their own lovers and careers and mingling with men on an equal basis were intellectuals from well-to-do family backgrounds, such as the novelists George Sand (Aurore Dupin) and Daniel Stern (Marie d'Agoult). In the 1830s, both scandalized polite society by their public extramarital liaisons with prominent male artists and writers, but their talents and personalities made them important figures in Parisian literary and political circles.

Another important early socialist was Charles Fourier. Like Saint-Simon, he had outlined his doctrines in numerous writings before 1830, but it was especially after the July Revolution that he began to find a real audience. An eccentric whose ideas were couched in a dense jargon of his own creation, Fourier was an acute critic of France's individualist society and of the bourgeois family, which he claimed condemned men and women alike to lives of frustration and boredom. In the ideal communities, or *phalansteries*, that he proposed, personality types would be combined in proper proportions so that no one would have to do tasks he or she found unpleasant, and those who found exclusive monogamous relationships confining could have multiple partners. Like Saint-Simon, Fourier attracted devoted disciples. Whereas Saint-Simon's ideas appealed especially to youths from well-to-do families who saw themselves as part of an educated elite with a vocation to lead society, Fourier's doctrines—simplified by followers like Victor Considerant—were taken up by some of the working classes. His criticism of monogamous marriage also influenced later feminists.

Lamennais

Another prophetic figure whose influence was at its peak during the first years of the July Monarchy was Felicité de Lamennais, the most original Catholic thinker of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the Restoration, Lamennais had been among the most vehement advocates of an authoritarian Catholic church that would be a close ally of the monarchy. During the 1820s, however, he had become disillusioned

with the results of the union of throne and altar. Rather than shaping a purified society inspired by Christian values, the Restoration government turned the church into a bureaucratic tool for its own purposes. By the end of the decade, Lamennais had become convinced that the spiritual welfare of the church required that it separate itself from the state.

The 1830 Revolution gave Lamennais the opportunity to promote his new ideas. Like Saint-Simon, he had gathered around him a group of energetic young disciples. With their help, he founded a newspaper, *L'Avenir*, to disseminate his views. Articles in this short-lived publication sowed the seeds for what came to be known as liberal Catholicism (which argued that the church could use the freedoms guaranteed by a liberal constitution for its own purposes) and social Catholicism (which insisted on the church's duty to ameliorate the devastating consequences of economic liberalism and unrestrained industrial development). The French Catholic hierarchy, staffed with clergy promoted during the Restoration, was horrified by Lamennais's ideas, and in August 1832, Lamennais found his doctrines condemned in the papal encyclical *Mirari vos*. Lamennais's followers bowed to the pope's orders, staying within the church and gradually gaining support for some of his suggestions. Lamennais himself took a different course. In April 1834 he published an explosive book, *Paroles d'un croyant* (*Words of a Believer*), using biblical language to predict the downfall of existing governments and the eventual triumph of a religiously inspired democracy. *Paroles d'un croyant* was a bestseller, but it sealed Lamennais's break with Rome. The pope condemned the book, and Lamennais found himself outside the church. He continued to write throughout the 1830s and 1840s, and his advocacy of a democratic faith helped infuse much of the social protest of the period with a religious aura.

Romanticism and Realism

Lamennais's writing style showed the continuing influence of the romantic current that had begun to dominate French literature in the 1820s. For Parisians, the months preceding Charles X's overthrow had been enlivened by a controversy over the *Comédie-française* production of Victor Hugo's drama *Hernani*, in which the young romantic playwright defied the conventions of French classical drama. Youthful liberals took up the play as a cause, and engaged in pitched battles inside and outside the theater with outraged partisans of cultural conservatism. Hugo's assertion, in his preface to his play, that "romanticism ... is nothing but liberalism in literature" underlined the close connection between literary and political movements. Another literary masterpiece closely associated with the 1830 Revolution was the novelist Stendhal's *The Red and the Black*, a scathing indictment of Restoration society that appeared just after the July Days. Older than most of the Romantic generation, Stendhal had associated himself with their cause in the 1820s, but the clear-eyed, ironic psychological insights of his novels set his work apart from the romantic mainstream. As he himself had anticipated, the greatness of his achievement only came to be appreciated many years after his death.

At the time, the educated public paid more attention to a cluster of young writers, the "generation of 1830," who also burst into the public eye with the July Revolution, including Romantic poets and writers such as Gérard de Nerval and Théophile Gautier. Publishers, whose business had suffered from the general economic slump of the late

1820s, found in these new authors a solution to their economic problems. A host of less talented writers copied the techniques of the great Romantics and produced a “popular Romanticism,” tailored to less sophisticated readers, that enjoyed a great vogue in the early 1830s. Although the Revolution of 1830 had created the atmosphere in which interest in their works flourished, the Romantics’ intense cultivation of private sensibility and aesthetic emotion soon separated them from a regime whose public values were those of economic success and bourgeois order. The young Romantics of the 1830 generation turned to a cult of “art for art’s sake,” denying that the artist should have any political role and condemning the “philistinism” of bourgeois society in the name of higher artistic values.

Orléanist Liberalism

Rather than convincing the leaders of the new regime to make broader reforms, the agitation of the early 1830s drove them to take an increasingly rigid conservative stance, and to give the doctrines of liberalism a clearer form. The regime’s most prominent spokesman was François Guizot. Under the Restoration, Guizot was one of France’s best-known historians. In his writings and lectures, he argued that the liberal ideals of 1789 were products of many centuries of historic development, going back to the emergence of free urban communes in the Middle Ages. He stressed the positive role of the middle classes in developing the ideal of freedom. In politics, Guizot was part of the *Doctrinaire* group that had hoped to build a stable constitutional monarchy on the basis of the *Charte*, until Charles X’s rigidity disillusioned them. Firm in his adherence to liberalism, Guizot had not the slightest sympathy for revolutionary violence. Once the installation of Louis-Philippe had consolidated constitutional monarchism, he was determined to prevent any further political upheaval. His followers proclaimed themselves the party of “resistance,” opposed to any political changes going beyond those enacted after the July Days, such as those proposed by the more progressive “party of movement.” The political task of the new regime, Guizot told the Chamber in 1831, was to find the *juste milieu*, the proper balance point that would allow it to “establish definitively, not order alone, not liberty alone, but order and liberty at the same time.”¹

For Guizot, the limitation of the electorate to the wealthiest fraction of the property-owning classes was essential to social order. He argued that this elite of notables—*influential* and property-owning community leaders—fairly represented the interests of all classes. They alone had the intelligence and the experience to make informed political judgments. For those whose income precluded them from voting but who wanted to participate in the political process, he had a simple recommendation: “*Enrichissez-vous!*” (“Make yourself wealthy!”). The possibility to do so, he argued, was open to anyone with the necessary talent. Guizot was not blind to the distress of the lower classes, but he was convinced that the only way to improve their condition was for the government to eschew interference in the economy. He did believe in universal education, which he thought would serve the cause of social stability by teaching the poor the economic reasons for their condition. As a result, Guizot was the main architect of the 1833 law that called for the establishment of public elementary schools in every French *commune*. Implementation of the law was slow, however. It took more than a generation before it became fully effective.

Guizot's main rival for political prominence throughout the July Monarchy was Adolphe Thiers, one of the key strategists of the Orléanist triumph in the 1830 Revolution. Thiers, a hard-working and intensely ambitious man, had, like Guizot, established himself with his pen during the 1820s. He had become a prominent journalist and had written an influential history of the French Revolution, in which he praised the early, reforming phase of that movement but condemned Robespierre and the Terror. In the 1830s, Thiers, like Guizot, strongly defended law and order and opposed all protest movements from below. He was somewhat more flexible than Guizot, however, and advocated gradual reforms that would give more modest sectors of the middle class the right to vote, as well as a more assertive foreign policy that appealed to nationalist sentiments.

Repressive Measures

To maintain its conservative policy of limiting political representation to the wealthy in the face of such widespread criticism and unrest, the July Monarchy was soon driven to adopt increasingly repressive measures. From the outset, the government harassed oppositional newspapers and caricaturists and, as early as April 1831, it pushed through the Chamber a severe new law against public demonstrations. In June 1832, republican groups in Paris tried to turn the funeral of one of their leaders, General Lamarque, into an uprising. The government responded by imposing a state of siege on the capital. (The romantic novelist Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, transformed into a popular musical in the late twentieth century, recreates these events.) By the time the Lyon silk workers rose up in an insurrection in April 1834, the forces of repression were well prepared. About 300 were killed in the two days of fighting that ended the largest outbreak of mass violence under the July Monarchy. The fears inspired by an unsuccessful assassination attempt on the king in 1835 led to the passage of the "September laws" later that year. They gave the government stricter control over the press and made convictions for political agitation easier to obtain. Armed with these new weapons, the police succeeded in putting an end to most public protest against the regime and bringing the revolutionary cycle that had begun in 1830 to an end. Subsequent movements like a republican conspiracy to overthrow the regime in 1839, organized by the veteran plotter Louis Blanqui's secret "Society of the Seasons," and two amateurish efforts in 1836 and 1840 by Napoleon's nephew and heir, Louis Bonaparte, to rally the army to the imperial banner were easily suppressed.

Although the government of the July Monarchy successfully defended itself against agitation from below, it failed to produce a stable parliamentary government during the 1830s. Between 1830 and 1840, 15 different ministries held office. Louis-Philippe was partly to blame for this. To maintain his own influence, he encouraged rivalries among the ministers and prevented the emergence of strong party leaders. In 1840, leading parliamentarians, frustrated by the king's maneuvers, united to impose real legislative rule on him, with Thiers as their leader. Thiers soon brought his ministry down through his aggressive foreign policy. In the summer of 1840, when an Egyptian leader, Mehemet Ali, led a revolt against Turkish rule, Thiers backed him. The British and other European powers prepared to defend the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, however, and France found itself dangerously isolated. Thiers talked of war; his threat to invade Germany inspired the composition of the

German patriotic anthem “The Watch on the Rhine.” His bellicose policy attracted support from the political left, but it alarmed the king and the Chamber, and Thiers had to resign in October 1840.

Thiers’s departure finally opened the way for François Guizot to take control of the ministry. For the next seven and a half years, Guizot determined government policy, although the aged Marshal Soult remained the nominal head of the cabinet until 1847. The Guizot government reversed Thiers’s adventurous foreign policy, emphasizing good relations with Britain, whose parliamentary regime Guizot admired. Queen Victoria’s state visit to France in 1843 marked the high point of this rapprochement. Rivalry with Britain did lead France to claim the island of Tahiti as a colony in 1842, beginning a process of French expansion in the Pacific whose legacy persists even today. The British decision to abolish slavery in their colonies in 1833 revived concern about this issue in France, where the 1794 revolutionary law abolishing the institution had been reversed under Napoleon in 1802. Opposition from plantation owners and Louis-Philippe’s fear that granting any reform would lead to demand for other changes prevented any immediate action, but the advocates of slavery were on the defensive.

In the wake of the Restoration’s invasion of Algeria just prior to the July Revolution of 1830, the Orleanist government had to decide whether to make French occupation permanent. In 1834, a young leader, Abd el-Kader, proclaimed himself the “sultan of the Arabs” and launched a *jihad* or holy war against the French, provoking a costly military response. A commission appointed to study the issue in 1840 to 1842 convinced the government that the territory could be pacified and become a home for European settlers, and that the indigenous population could be won over and assimilated to French ways of life. French troops under General Bugeaud used brutal tactics, including the suffocation of 800 Arabic troops trapped in a cave at Dahra, and finally forced Abd el-Kader to surrender in December 1847. The methods used to bring Algeria under control raised questions about the supposed benefits that the extension of French control would bring to its population. Speaking for a parliamentary commission in 1847, Alexis de Tocqueville, a supporter of colonialism, nevertheless wrote, “We have made the Muslims more miserable, more disorganized, more ignorant, and more barbarous than they were before we encountered them.”²

At home, Guizot’s policy was one of principled immobility. He stood steadfast against any efforts at reform, and above all he opposed any extension of the right to vote in national elections, including the idea of giving the franchise to women. To maintain himself in office, Guizot perfected tactics of electoral manipulation that had already been used throughout the 1830s. The government sponsored candidates, often public officials who could be counted on to vote as their superiors told them (in 1846, 40 percent of deputies held government jobs), and used the prefects to put pressure on the voters. With legitimist, republican, and Bonapartist critics largely silenced, the main public opposition to Guizot came from the deputies of the “dynastic opposition,” led by Odilon Barrot, who accepted the main features of the regime but called for a gradual broadening of the franchise that would open it to more of the middle class. In local elections, the requirements for voting were lower than in national contests, and the results seemed to show that they did not pose a threat to the regime. Even as French society was experiencing a rapid transformation, however, Guizot remained convinced that the regime set up after 1830 had no need of reform.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Thomas C. Mendenhall, et al., eds., *The Quest for a Principle of Authority in Europe, 1715–Present* (New York: Henry Holt, 1948), 144.
- 2 Cited in C.-R. Ageron, *Histoire de l'Algérie Contemporaine* (Paris, 1969), 20.

12 A New Social World

While Louis-Philippe and Guizot stubbornly rejected any evolution in France's political institutions, striking changes were occurring in the country during the 1830s and 1840s. In these decades, France felt the first effects of industrialization. The bourgeoisie that had helped overthrow the Old Regime in 1789 consolidated its position as French society's dominant class, while the rapid growth of the urban population created a sense of social crisis.

The Beginnings of French Industrialization

By the 1830s, French observers had become acutely aware of the industrial revolution that was transforming the economy and the very landscape of some regions of neighboring Britain. Although French industrial development lagged behind Britain's, by the 1830s similar processes were underway in some regions of the country. Economic historians have long argued over whether the concept of "industrial revolution"—a rapid and dramatic transformation analogous to what occurred in England at the end of the eighteenth century—is applicable to the slower and more gradual way in which France entered the industrial era. There is general agreement, however, that the years after 1830 saw the first significant development of modern factory-based industry in the country and the beginnings of profound social changes that accompanied it.

Industrialization meant first of all the adoption of new, mechanized methods for producing goods. In the textile industry, still France's largest, power-driven spinning jennies and "mules" copied from English models replaced the hand-operated spinning wheel, and power looms took over weaving, making production faster and cheaper. Instead of contracting with workers who produced goods at home, using simple machinery like hand looms, entrepreneurs began to concentrate production processes in large factory buildings. As the machines they employed became larger, more expensive, and more complicated, they increasingly depended on the power of water wheels or steam engines. And, for a variety of reasons, factories tended to cluster in particular regions, creating centers of industrial development and ending the centuries-old pattern in which manufacturing enterprises were scattered throughout the country to serve local markets.

Factory-based textile production developed primarily in France's north and northeast, in cities such as Rouen, Lille, and Mulhouse. The increasing availability of high-quality raw cotton, first from Egypt and, after 1840, from the southern United States, encouraged the growth of the industry. Inexpensive and colorful cotton fabrics were a favorite with a rapidly growing middle class that wanted to keep up with changing

fashions. The streams of the hilly Vosges region around the Alsatian city of Mulhouse provided water power for the mills, and the growing population provided an ample number of workers. By the mid-1840s, Mulhouse was as up-to-date and efficient a manufacturing region as any to be found in Europe. Nevertheless, French manufacturers had trouble challenging England's firm grip on the world market. In 1845, the peak year for French cotton goods production in the first half of the century, the country imported 60,000 tons of raw cotton for its mills. In the same year, Britain imported 276,000 tons—more than four times as much.¹

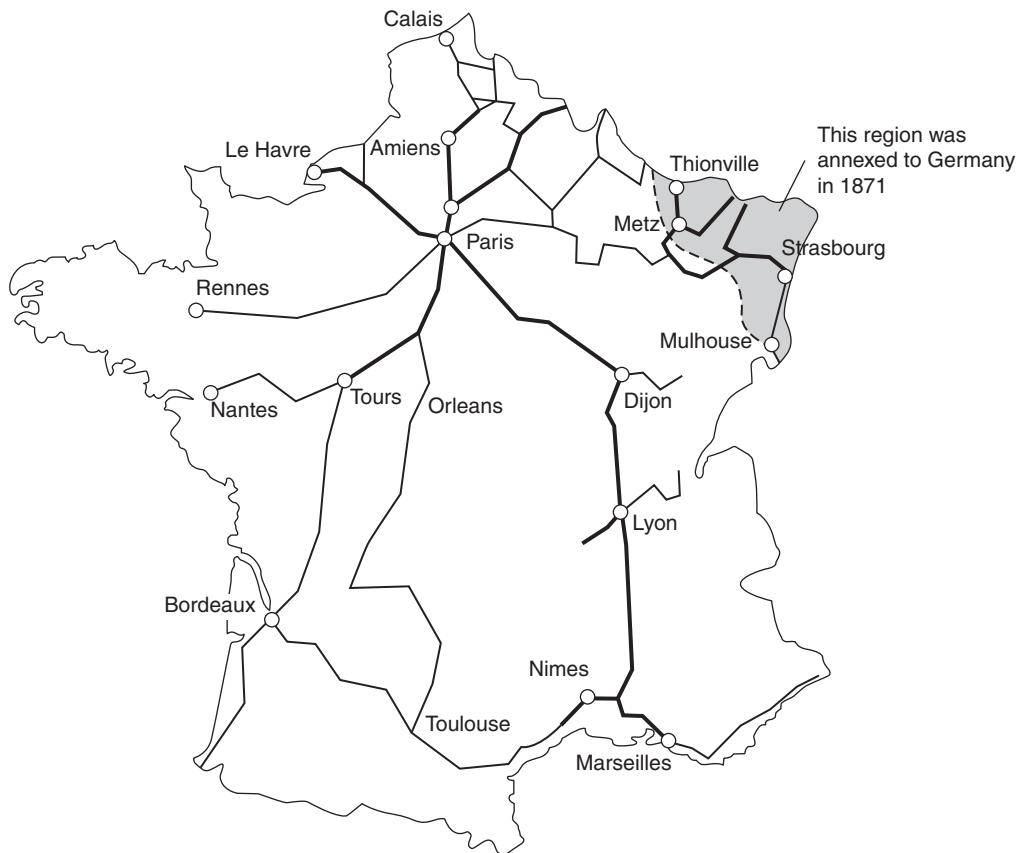
Economic historians have advanced many explanations for the slow transformation of French industry in comparison with the British. France lacked some of Britain's natural economic advantages, such as the coal and iron deposits conveniently located together that furthered iron-making across the Channel. France also lacked the ability of British manufacturers to ship raw materials and manufactured products by water throughout the country. However, most historians who have suggested that France's economy could have industrialized more rapidly have stressed the effect of French entrepreneurs' attitudes more than objective factors. In general, French manufacturers were conservative in their investment strategies and cautious about the prospects for making large profits by expanding production. Instead they preferred to keep their enterprises under family control, and to avoid selling stock to outsiders or borrowing heavily from banks. Bankers shared the conservatism of the manufacturers and were reluctant to lend money for industrial investment. As a result, French factories were usually too small in size to achieve gains in productivity equal to those of their British rivals.

French workers, too, acted in ways that slowed the adoption of new industrial methods. More strongly than British workers, they clung to their self-image as independent producers, even when they did their actual work on manufacturer-owned machines in factory buildings. Handloom weavers accepted reduced piece rates rather than abandoning their traditional autonomy for factory work. In many areas, factory workers were peasants who also continued to farm their plots part-time, thereby maintaining a margin of economic independence that made it difficult for employers to regiment them. Finally, the French government, even in the July Monarchy period when it was officially committed to *laissez faire*, regulated and controlled economic activity more than the British, sometimes discouraging innovation.

The introduction of the railroad, which took place during the July Monarchy, offered an opportunity to break through one of the major obstacles to industrial development, the limitations of France's transportation network. The huge job of constructing a national rail system also provided an important stimulus to the growth of French industry. The first successful rail line using steam locomotives had been opened in England in 1830. In Britain, private entrepreneurs had taken the initiative in creating the rail system, but in France the government played a larger role. Trained government engineers, traditionally responsible for the design of France's roads and canals, opposed letting private companies dictate the shape of the future French transport system. In 1842, they persuaded the Chamber of Deputies to vote for a centrally planned system, the "Legrand Star," named for its designer, civil engineer Victor Legrand. Legrand's plan called for trunk lines connecting Paris to the major provincial cities. The government was to provide the roadbeds, and the private companies that were to be given concessions to build the actual railroads had to follow state-imposed specifications much stricter than those in other countries. When the system was finally completed in

the 1850s, France had a rail network that was better built and able to accommodate faster trains than her neighbors'. But the French system had also been more costly to construct and had taken longer to finish. The routes were chosen more for administrative and military purposes than for economic ones. The centralization of the system in Paris, together with the neglect of lines connecting major provincial cities, slowed the development of a true national market.

Whatever shortcomings the Legrand plan may have had, the heavy investment in railroad construction in the 1840s spurred overall French economic development. Initially, locomotives had to be imported from England, but French firms soon began producing their own equipment, and the growth of railroads spurred the development of iron making. Railroad projects were too costly to be handled by traditional family firms; they demanded joint-stock companies and encouraged the growth of the capital market—along with a great deal of speculation, corruption, and fraud. Thanks in large



Map 12.1 Main Rail Lines in France, 1878

The French rail system, largely completed during the Second Empire, centered on the capital. Thickness of lines indicates volume of traffic.

part to the start of large-scale railroad construction, France enjoyed its first true industrial boom from 1842 to 1845. Lines linking Paris to Orléans and Rouen were completed in 1843, and the route to the Belgian border was finished in 1847. While the growth of the rail system promoted technological modernization, it did not immediately eliminate older ways of doing things. The increased circulation of people and goods made possible by the railroads led to a greater need for horses to provide local transportation, for example. The nineteenth century became “the century of the horse,” as French historian Daniel Roche has written, and led to the creation of breeds especially adapted to farmwork, hauling heavy loads, and pulling elegant private carriages.

Bourgeois Society

The shift from Charles X to Louis-Philippe and the July Monarchy symbolized a major social transformation. The new regime was seen from the start as a “bourgeois monarchy.” The tendency of many aristocrats to withdraw from court life in protest against the overthrow of the Bourbons accentuated the symbolic social cleavage caused by the July Revolution. But the ruling elite of the period was by no means a cross section of the former Third Estate. Many of its members had aristocratic titles—some from old families that accepted the new order, like Alexis de Tocqueville, and others who had been ennobled under Napoleon or were elevated to the peerage by Louis-Philippe himself. Despite the claim that Louis-Philippe’s rule was a “bourgeois monarchy,” the royal family associated primarily with the rich, hosting lavish balls at the Tuileries Palace with up to 3,000 guests. Land ownership remained a major source of wealth for most of this elite, but it also included many people whose fortunes were based on other activities. Bankers were especially prominent in the early years of the regime, and the economic expansion of the period propelled many industrialists into the ranks of the dominant class. The ascendancy of the Jewish banker James Rothschild, whose investments extended to every area of the new industrial economy, symbolized the degree to which wealth allowed successful individuals to transcend the old barriers of religion and status. Lawyers, magistrates, and high-ranking government officials made up another important component of the bourgeoisie. As the cases of Guizot, Thiers, and the regime’s semiofficial philosopher Victor Cousin demonstrated, there was a place in this group for men who distinguished themselves by exceptional intellectual talents. The governing stratum of the bourgeoisie under the July Monarchy was no longer a hereditary privileged group, like the nobility of the Old Regime, and its economic position was no longer based solely on ownership of land. But this *haute bourgeoisie* (those rich enough to vote in national elections) remained a small minority, set off from the rest of French society by its wealth and lifestyle.

Below the level of the *haute bourgeoisie* was a large and diverse middle group, clearly better off than artisans and peasants but distinctly less privileged than those at the top. This middle class included educated professionals—lawyers, doctors, notaries, professors, journalists—as well as small businessmen and rural landowners. At the lower boundary of the middle class, shopkeepers and master artisans struggled to distinguish themselves from the urban working classes. Dazzling ascents from rags to riches were the exception, but access to the more modest levels of the middle class in the first half of the nineteenth century was fairly open. Hardworking and successful shopkeepers could hope to rise to the status of merchants, and owners of small workshops had the

opportunity to become factory owners. Thrifty small-town families, who could afford advanced schooling for their sons, could hope to see them established as lawyers in bigger cities.

The common characteristics shared by the *haute bourgeoisie* and the middle classes were the possession of some form of property, or *patrimoine*, a certain degree of education, and a lifestyle that increasingly set them apart from the poorer sectors of the population. The basis of most bourgeois fortunes was the family business, whether it was a small shop or a large factory. If the business prospered, the typical bourgeois would plow the profits into conservative investments—land, government bonds, shares in railroads and mining enterprises—that would guarantee the family's financial status. Successful bourgeois families also spent money to acquire the proper trappings for their preferred style of life. In Paris, old noble *hotels* that had housed a single aristocratic clan were now subdivided into apartments for the increasingly numerous bourgeois, who filled them with a clutter of furniture and decorative objects. Advice books counseled bourgeois buyers on how to furnish their homes tastefully, so that their possessions would demonstrate their social status.

Education was another form of bourgeois investment. Sons were sent to the state-run but tuition-charging *lycées* established under Napoleon, where they received training that would set them apart from the less privileged. The curriculum, which stressed the study of Latin, had little to do with the careers most of these men later pursued, but it gave them a common culture and a sense of their superiority and right to lead. Those destined for the professions—particularly teaching, the law, and state administration—undertook further studies after obtaining the *baccalauréat* at the end of their *lycée* days. The system of *grandes écoles*, national schools that prepared outstanding students for careers in teaching or the technical professions, had been established under Napoleon. Admission was by open competition, but in practice only students from wealthy families could afford the lengthy preparation necessary for success. Daughters of bourgeois families did not have the same educational opportunities. Often educated in Catholic convent schools, they were prepared for marriages with men of their own class that would consolidate family fortunes.

The memoirs of Jean-Baptiste Monfalcon, a doctor, writer, and librarian from Lyon, provide insights into the world of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. Like many members of this group, Monfalcon had risen above humble origins thanks to his parents' determination to give him an education. His medical training and the taste for literature that he acquired during his student years cut him off from his family roots, however. Bourgeois life had its attractions but also its drawbacks. Monfalcon himself commented on his own limited sexual experience, and his devotion to the code of honor of bourgeois men meant that he had to risk fighting several duels during the years when he wrote regularly for local newspapers. Monfalcon did try to improve the lives of the poorer classes from whose ranks he had come, through his work as a doctor at Lyon's charity hospital and through efforts to improve urban sanitation, but he was convinced that the poor and uneducated should not play any role in politics. Monfalcon sincerely believed that the educated classes had a mission to support culture and improvement, but he did not think that most of the population would ever be able to participate in intellectual activities. Appointed as the municipal librarian in the 1840s, Monfalcon was less interested in spreading the habit of reading than in acquiring expensive editions that would make the city's collection a symbol of its status.²

While bourgeois men engaged themselves in the rough-and-tumble of business and politics, the bourgeois home came to be increasingly a woman's domain. Historian Bonnie Smith's case study of bourgeois women in the textile-manufacturing region around Lille shows how this new domesticity developed in the first half of the nineteenth century. Up to 1820, it was still common for the wives of entrepreneurs to take an active role in the family business enterprise, sometimes even traveling extensively to deal with suppliers and retailers. As industry developed, however, the wives of prosperous mill owners were excluded from their husbands' businesses, where hired male employees took over their functions. These "ladies of the leisure class" accepted a new pattern for living based on the division of life into a male public sphere of business and politics, and a female private sphere of family life.

Bourgeois women's lives were supposed to be centered on their families. Children occupied a central place in bourgeois domestic life. The period saw a marked increase in the sale of commercially marketed toys and of books and magazines for young people. The passage of a law in 1841 limiting child labor—the French state's first intervention in the workplace—signaled the growing concern for child welfare. Family identity was also maintained through a new cult of family gravesites. A Napoleonic law of 1804 entitled every citizen to purchase an individual cemetery plot and a decorated tombstone. (Previously, bodies had been buried in mass graves without individual markers.) Visits to the burial sites of loved ones became an important family ritual in the nineteenth century.

As the mid-nineteenth-century illustration of "the different social roles of women" reproduced here shows, many women, including some from the middle classes, were active outside the home. Although the women shown are all in occupations that were traditionally considered appropriate for their sex, the picture conveys a clear impression of the variety and importance of women's work. Catholic nuns continued to staff the country's hospitals, and midwives continued to deliver the majority of babies. The growing number of girls' schools created a need for teachers, and therefore for women who had more than an elementary education themselves. Despite the Napoleonic Code's restrictions on women's control of money and property, some women did run businesses, like the fashion-shop owner shown at the top of the pyramid in the illustration. The three figures on the right-hand side of the picture—a household servant, a weaver, and a peasant—are reminders that women also performed a good share of the manual labor on which the French economy depended. Bourgeois life depended on the availability of maids, cooks, and nannies to free wealthier women from household chores, while factory owners often preferred women as workers because they were considered less likely to cause trouble.

Peasant Life

The new social patterns pioneered by France's small bourgeois elite were held up as models for the lower classes, but few workers or peasants could hope to emulate them in real life. Peasant life changed most dramatically in areas where the population had extensive contact with urban life. In the large rural villages of Provence, for example, where public sociability was widespread, peasants influenced by their more bourgeois fellow citizens developed new political attitudes and new habits of social behavior, such as drinking in public at a neighborhood cabaret or *chambrée* (drinking club). In more isolated rural areas, however, bourgeois models of behavior had less impact. Not all



Figure 12.1 The Different Social Roles of Women

This mid-nineteenth-century engraving of “the different social roles of women” reflects a recognition that French women performed many functions besides those of wife and mother, even though they were excluded from the most prestigious public positions and had only limited rights under the Civil Code. (Photo: 12/ Alamy Stock Photo)

changes in the countryside reflected imitation of urban patterns. Deliberate control of births in order to keep the number of children in the family down was more common among peasants than among urban groups in the first half of the nineteenth century. It was partly a reaction to the new inheritance laws passed during the revolutionary period, which required the equal division of family property among heirs. Peasant property owners feared the splitting up of their land into uneconomically small units. Rural overcrowding was serious in some regions. The July Monarchy was the first period in which some poorer farming areas began to witness an actual decrease in population as young people left to find employment in the cities.

The New Urban World

Changes in urban living patterns were more visible than those in the countryside. Urbanization was not simply a result of industrial development, although factory cities like Lille and Mulhouse experienced the highest rates of growth. The growing wealth of the urban bourgeoisie created new employment opportunities even in traditional, nonindustrial occupations, such as domestic service. Rural overpopulation left many

young people with no alternative but to seek their fortune in the nearest town. Growth in Paris outpaced that in most other urban areas, reflecting the capital's expanding role as a center of administration, finance, and culture. The city's population doubled in the first half of the century, reaching a level of over a million.

Most new urban migrants arrived with little money, and were forced to live in crowded, unhealthy conditions in the poorer sections of the big cities, such as the *Ile de la Cité* in Paris and the Saint-Sauveur district in Lille. Upper-class observers like Louis-René Villermé, whose book on the living conditions of French textile workers was published in 1840, spread alarm about the impact of industrialization and urbanization. They described in graphic detail the squalid conditions in France's worst urban slums and the disease and signs of social breakdown that accompanied them. Villermé reported from Mulhouse:

A single, bad straw mattress for the whole family, a small stove which serves for cooking and for heating, a crate or large box masquerading as a cupboard, a table, two or three chairs, a bench, some dishes—these make up the normal furnishings of the rooms of the workers.³

The cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1849, which struck especially hard in the poorer quarters of the large cities, underlined this message. Respectable property owners who lived in fear of the “dangerous classes” crowded together in poor urban neighborhoods. Poverty went together with crime and evidence of social breakdown, such as the spread of prostitution—an inevitable by-product of the fact that most migrants were young single men and that poor urban women often found themselves with no other resource to sell but their bodies. Bourgeois fears led to demands for better policing and the more efficient registration of prostitutes. Despite the extensive discussion of urban problems, the budget-conscious July Monarchy government made no systematic effort to improve conditions.

In the minds of bourgeois observers, the increasingly visible problems in France's cities were linked to the rapid growth of a new industrial working class, a creation of the new age of machines. In fact, this impression was misleading. Large factories remained relatively rare in France, and most urban workers continued to be employed in small workshops, using hand tools. Indeed, many artisans were still small, independent entrepreneurs, like the master silk weavers, or *canuts*, of Lyon, who played leading roles in the workers' insurrections of 1831 and 1834. Where there were factories, employees were likely to include more women and children than men, since their salaries were lower and they were less likely to object to industrial discipline. Domestic service continued to be the most common occupation for urban women, however, and the retail sector also absorbed a significant fraction of the workforce.

If the rhetoric of the period nevertheless tended to describe urban society as being divided into two hostile blocs of bourgeois and proletarians, it was in part because the laboring classes themselves were becoming more conscious of what divided them from the rest of society. A newspaper founded in Lyon in 1833 to speak for them introduced a new vocabulary, calling itself the *Echo des travailleurs* (“The Workers’ Echo”) and addressing itself to “all proletarians ... because in our eyes all proletarians share the same interests.”⁴ Forbidden to organize collectively to bargain with their employers by the Le Chapelier law of 1791, urban workers nevertheless refused to be reduced to a mass of isolated individuals, living solely by the sale of their labor. In some of the

more skilled trades, the prerevolutionary *compagnonnages*, or journeymen's leagues, remained powerful. Throughout the period, the authorities tolerated the formation of mutual aid societies that collected dues from members and maintained a fund to aid the sick and unemployed, and meet expenses of members' funerals. Another way in which workers contested the developing capitalist system was the development of consumer cooperatives. The first French cooperative store opened in Lyon in 1835. Women took an active role in many of the early French cooperative experiments.

Mutual aid societies, which became increasingly numerous in the 1830s and 1840s, often served as a cover for collective agitation against employers. When waves of strikes did break out, the police invariably found members of mutual aid societies among their leaders. Strike action, like the formation of unions, was illegal, but this did not prevent workers from resorting to it when they found themselves sufficiently hard-pressed. The 1830 Revolution—in which popular mass action had toppled a government—and republican agitation both encouraged worker militancy. The strikes of the period were usually spontaneous outbursts: poorly planned from the point of view of bringing

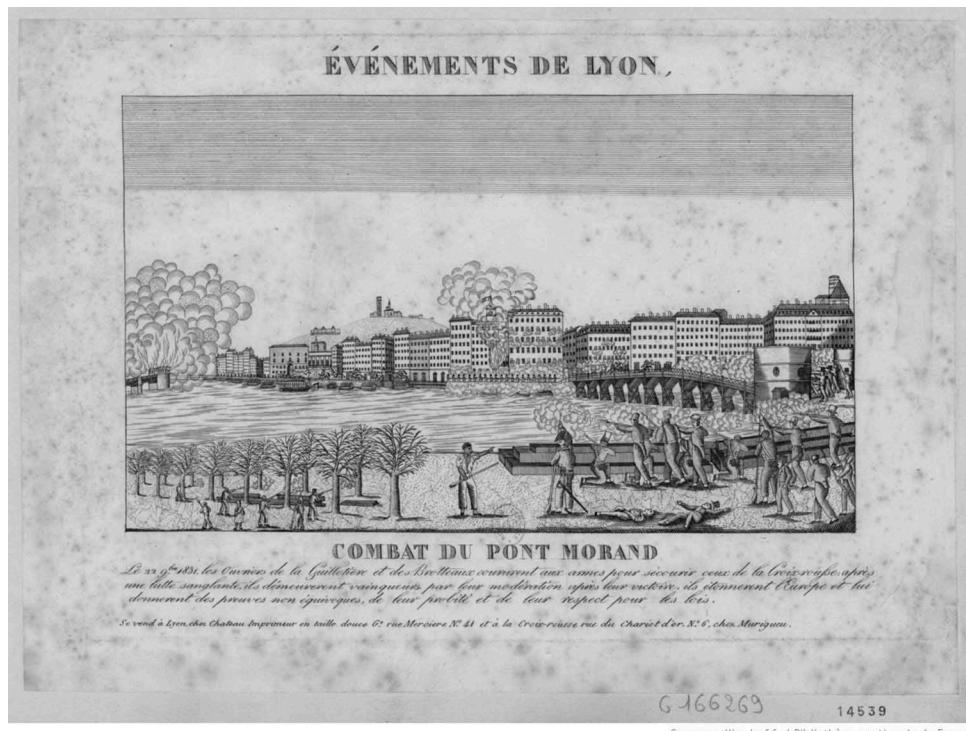


Figure 12.2 The Revolt of Lyon's Silkworkers or Canuts in November 1831

The revolt of Lyon's silkworkers or canuts in November 1831 was the first proletarian insurrection in modern European history and caused a sensation across the Continent. The isolated figure in the foreground is "Stanislas the Negro," a black man whose role in the fighting is mentioned in several sources. The caption says that the rebels "astonished Europe and gave it unequivocal proofs of their honesty and their respect for the laws." (Collection Michel Hennin. Estampes relatives à l'Histoire de France. Tome 166, Pièces 14,530–14,592, période: 1831–1832. Bibliothèque nationale de France.)

economic pressure on particular employers. They generally affected all the enterprises in an industry in the region where they occurred and often spilled over into violence. The prefects and the police tended to intervene on the side of the employers, and the most serious outbreaks of worker militancy—such as the Lyon silk-workers' uprisings of 1831 and 1834—often ended bloodily. But these militant protests were clear evidence of workers' growing self-consciousness and discontent.

Cultural Trends

Although the July Monarchy harassed caricaturists who ridiculed the king and handed out public commissions to conformist painters, it nevertheless tolerated a wide range of cultural tendencies. An increasingly educated population and France's growing prosperity provided a wider audience for books, periodicals, art exhibitions, and other cultural manifestations. Publishers and other cultural entrepreneurs became increasingly adept at exploiting this enlarged market.

The populist Romanticism that had suffused Lamennais's writings in the early 1830s colored the works of the historian Jules Michelet, whose books on the Middle Ages and the French Revolution stressed the creative role of the common people. In his best-selling volume *Le Peuple (The People)*, published in 1846, Michelet contrasted the cultured but desiccated upper classes with the common folk, "full of a new sap, life-giving and rejuvenating," whose energy would give France the dynamism it needed to fulfil its role of promoting freedom in the world.⁵ The Romantic movement remained strong into the 1840s, but as memories of the July Revolution faded and the new regime put down firmer roots, a new realist current surfaced among artists and writers who sought to depict the society around them. The best known of France's realistic novelists was Honoré de Balzac, who enjoyed his first major successes in the 1830s. Balzac conceived his many novels as part of one overarching *Comédie humaine*, a "human comedy" portraying all aspects of French society, just as Dante's *Divine Comedy* had portrayed all of heaven and hell. Many of Balzac's stories revolved around the theme of how the unbridled pursuit of money and individual success ultimately degraded human life and led to tragedy. A political conservative, Balzac contrasted this world unfavorably with the ordered, religious world he imagined to have existed in the past. Despite his professed distaste for the world of Guizot and Rothschild, however, his novels themselves conveyed the energy and dynamism of the new society.

Balzac's novels were just one of the many cultural products that reached an ever-growing audience as culture became increasingly commercialized during the 1830s and 1840s. A growing number of museums, public concert series, public lectures, and magazines brought art, music, and ideas to a larger audience. Privately owned reading rooms and lending libraries made periodicals and books available to those who could not afford to purchase them. There were as many as 400 *cabinets de lecture* in Paris under the July Monarchy. The launching of Emile Girardin's low-priced newspaper, *La Presse*, and its imitator and rival, *Le Siècle*, in 1836, as well as the introduction of cheap paperback books in 1838, were milestones in this commercialization of culture. These new-style newspapers were sold at half the price of Paris's existing daily papers, so that ordinary members of the middle class could afford them. Unlike the politically oriented titles they sought to replace, *La Presse* and *Le Siècle* eagerly sought out commercial advertising, using the revenue generated this way to compensate for their reduced price. They also tailored their content to an audience with less literary and

political sophistication than the small elite of notables who read the more expensive political dailies.

Newspapers found a particularly successful way to boost their circulation when they began publishing novels in serial form. These *romans-feuilletons* were an immense success. Readers rushed to newsstands to get each new installment, boosting the newspapers' circulation and allowing them to pay unheard-of sums to the most popular authors. George Sand, the most successful woman author of the period, and Balzac were among the literary notables who profited from the demand for *romans-feuilletons*. But the master of the genre was Eugène Sue, whose melodramatic stories of life among the Paris poor made the fortune of several different newspapers. He received 100,000 francs for the rights to his *Wandering Jew*, which appeared in installments over 13 months between 1844 and 1845. Critics deplored the debasement in literary taste they associated with the vogue of the *romans-feuilletons*, but these works and the inexpensive newspapers that carried them greatly broadened the French reading audience.

Press barons like Emile Girardin embraced the new, business-oriented world of the July Monarchy, but undercurrents of resistance against it remained strong throughout the 1840s. In contrast to the Saint-Simonians and Lamennais, many of the protest movements in the 1840s became more pragmatic as they adjusted to the new realities of social and economic life. The liberal Catholicism developed in the late 1830s and 1840s by some of Lamennais's former followers was one example of ideals being tempered to fit the reality of mid-nineteenth-century France. Charles de Montalembert, an aristocratic layman who had accompanied Lamennais on his unsuccessful trip to Rome in 1833, urged Catholics to abandon their dream of an integral Catholic society in return for freedom to organize their own institutions. The liberal Catholic movement focused particularly on educational issues. Guizot's 1833 primary education law had provided for a state-run school system, which threatened to replace the Catholic institutions that had long provided most of the elementary education in many regions. In the interests of promoting national unity and equality, the Church was forbidden to set up its own system of secondary schools. Montalembert and his supporters denounced this as a violation of their rights as citizens, and their agitation made the Catholic-schools issue one of the dominant themes of public debate in the early 1840s.

Although the July Monarchy government continued to oppose religious schools, attitudes toward religion were changing by the 1840s. Many socialist and democratic movements followed the example of Lamennais and contended that Jesus would have endorsed their calls for equality and social justice. Feminists also put their arguments in religious terms. These groups often called for a simple, popular version of Christianity, but much of the French population still remained loyal to the Catholic Church. Several visionaries who reported that Mary had appeared to them and given them special messages for France attracted large followings, foreshadowing the response to the most famous of these apparitions, that of Bernadette de Soubirous at Lourdes in 1858.

Socialists and Other Critics

After 1840, socialist thinkers increasingly addressed themselves directly to the growing number of discontented workers in France's cities, urging them to see themselves as victims of an industrial society that measured their worth in purely economic terms. Utopian elements remained strong in some of these groups, such as Etienne Cabet's Icarian movement, which was the first to attract a mass following (perhaps as many as 100,000) during

the 1840s. Cabet appealed to workers with his vision of a communistically organized society in which private property would be abolished and individuals would cooperate voluntarily to meet social needs. Cabet, a pacifist, opposed violence and eventually threw his energies into organizing an unsuccessful community to be founded in Texas. The Revolution of 1848 left his movement behind.

Other socialists who had emerged during the 1840s were destined to play a larger role in that upheaval, however. In the early 1840s, the courageous militant Flora Tristan tried to organize a nationwide working-class movement, *L'Union ouvrière*. Through speeches and writings, she tried to combine improvements in workers' conditions with equality for women. She died during an organizing tour in 1844. Louis Blanc's book *The Organization of Labor*, published in 1840, made him one of the best-known socialist writers in France. He proposed to resolve the problems of the working class through state-sponsored workers' cooperatives. Universal suffrage would guarantee a government sensitive to workers' needs. Blanc's combination of democracy and socialism had considerable influence on the subsequent evolution of French leftwing movements, although the 1848 Revolution was to show that even his pragmatic proposals for change were hard to put into practice. Socialist critiques of capitalism sometimes took on troubling anti-Semitic overtones, as authors like the Fourierist Alphonse Toussenel and the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon denounced Jewish moneylenders and businessmen for exploiting the poor.

Socialists were not the only ones to demand concrete improvements in the lives of the oppressed during the July Monarchy. Frustrated by the Guizot government's inaction on slavery, abolitionists like Cyrille Bissette, who had founded the first French periodical edited by a black writer in 1834, and Victor Schoelcher stepped up their campaign against the institution in the late 1840s; for the first time since the 1790s, they succeeded in winning considerable public support. Conservative critics who blamed the liberal July Monarchy for encouraging the unbridled pursuit of profit did as much as the socialists to spread the impression that France's cities were becoming the home of a massive and impoverished industrial proletariat whose living conditions needed to be improved. In 1835, the most insightful liberal thinker of the period, Alexis de Tocqueville, published the first volume of his *Democracy in America*, suggesting that its model of an egalitarian society would eventually spread to Europe. Implicit in Tocqueville's admiration for the vigorous American citizenry was a critique of the French lack of civic-mindedness. But his criticism of the conformism of American life and the lack of a genuine cultural tradition conveyed a regret about aspects of European civilization that he feared were doomed by the progress of democracy.

While critics stressed the need for social reform, the July Monarchy's ruling elites sought to create a new version of national memory that would unify the country. Louis-Philippe directed the transformation of the old royal palace at Versailles into a historical museum housing paintings celebrating all periods of French history, from the time of Clovis to the Revolution, culminating with a picture of himself taking the oath to defend the Constitution of 1830. "He has gathered the great historical family of France, he has reunited the various epochs, reconciled everyone," a journalist wrote when the exhibit opened.⁶ The political leader Guizot contributed to this effort by founding the Société de l'Histoire de France, dedicated to the collection and publication of important documents that illustrated the development of the French nation. The most spectacular of these efforts to shape historical memory were the completion of the Arch of Triumph celebrating the victories of Napoleon's armies at the end of Paris's

Champs-Elysées avenue in 1836 and the 1840 repatriation of the emperor's remains to Paris from the distant island of Saint-Helena, where he had died in 1821. Under the Restoration, Napoleon had been condemned as a "usurper," but his coffin was now given a place of honor in the Invalides church, where it remains one of the country's most-visited tourist attractions. The two monuments reflected the Orleanist monarchy's effort to cultivate a spirit of national pride rooted in military success that was odds with the regime's relatively pacifistic foreign policy.

As the regime created in 1830 neared the end of its second decade, French society had clearly begun to take on a new shape. The ascendancy of the bourgeoisie, first proclaimed in 1789, had become a reality, as the values and lifestyle of this class replaced those of the landed aristocracy. Although few French workers were employed in large factories, the organization of French industry had changed; new machines had become commonplace, and the rapidly expanding railroad system provided clear evidence that the country was entering a new era. A growing culture industry of newspapers, reading rooms, and other enterprises ensured the broad circulation of new ideas. Politics remained, however, the preserve of a narrow elite. The number of men wealthy enough to vote in national elections did grow steadily in the 1840s, going from around 170,000 in 1830 to over 266,000 in 1846, but this still remained a small fraction of those who had the wealth and education to feel entitled to a voice in public affairs. The working class, ever more conscious of its problems, remained entirely excluded from politics, and not all women were willing to accept a system that consigned them to a limited role. Unwilling to bring most members of French society into the political system, the July Monarchy rested on a perilously narrow base.

Notes

- 1 Figures from David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 165.
- 2 Jean-Baptiste Monfalcon, *Souvenirs d'un bibliothécaire, ou Une vie d'homme de lettres en province* (Lyon: Nigon, 1853).
- 3 Cited in William Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 177.
- 4 Cited in Jeremy D. Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France, 1830–1835* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2002), 152.
- 5 Cited in Paul Vialleneix, ed., *Michelet Cent Ans Après* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1975), 31.
- 6 Cited in Thomas W. Gaehtgens, "The Historical Museum at Versailles," in Pierre Nora, dir., *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, 4 vols., trans. David P. Jordan (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001–2010), 4:183.

13 The Revolution of 1848

The Crisis of Bourgeois Society

Had the rapid economic and social changes of the 1830s and 1840s made a new revolutionary upheaval unavoidable in France? Alexis de Tocqueville, known for his book on American democracy, warned the Chamber of Deputies in January 1848 that the growing division between rich and poor in France and the spread of socialist ideas were making a revolution inevitable: “We are lulling ourselves to sleep over an active volcano.”¹ When a popular uprising overthrew the July Monarchy a few weeks later, he gained a reputation as a prophet. But the Revolution of 1848 was a more complicated affair than the social civil war Tocqueville had warned of. It was made possible by widespread discontent among the educated classes as well as among the urban poor. The bloodiest moment of the Revolution—the war of barricades in Paris in June 1848—pitted the city’s underclass against equally poor soldiers recruited from the countryside. The revolutionary upheaval of 1848 ended with the establishment of a new authoritarian regime and the consolidation of the bourgeois social order, but it did plant the seeds for the eventual success of democratic republicanism in France.

The February Revolution

The July Monarchy’s sudden collapse came as a surprise. A popular revolt would have seemed more likely in 1846 or 1847, when France had suffered a sharp economic depression. The boom fueled by the 1842 railroad-building program had burst in 1845, and agriculture had been hard hit by crop failures, especially the potato blight—the same plant disease that caused deadly famine in Ireland in 1846. Outbreaks of social violence, such as a riot in the provincial town of Buzançais in which a local bourgeois was massacred, had spurred widespread anxiety. Guizot’s government did little to alleviate the resulting unemployment and misery, but the economic crisis actually dampened worker agitation. Concern about eking out a living and fear of unemployment discouraged organized protests.

By late 1847, however, the economic crisis was easing and the most visible opposition to the July Monarchy came not from the lower classes but from upper- and middle-class groups excluded from the political system. The long-standing school conflict alienated even many wealthy Catholics from the regime. Aristocratic land-owners continued to regard Louis-Philippe as a usurper. Students protested against the government’s silencing of outspoken professors, such as the Romantic historian Michelet. Most seriously, the “bourgeois monarchy” continued to deny much of the bourgeoisie itself any political role. The theme of electoral reform provided a basis for the

development of an eminently respectable opposition movement that was not overtly revolutionary. Indeed, the deputies and bourgeois notables who organized this national campaign would never have begun to agitate unless they had been confident that they could do so without unleashing dangerous unrest.

The electoral reformers' strategy was to hold banquets in major provincial cities, charging admission fees to limit the attendance to members of the middle class. By providing a focus for public protest, however, the banquet campaigners set in motion a much broader movement. As the campaign moved from city to city, workers, artisans, and small shopkeepers turned out in the streets to cheer the bourgeois opponents of the regime and express their own discontent. By the time the banquet campaign's planned climax in Paris in late February approached, both the government and its organizers had begun to fear that matters were getting out of hand, and the organizers were almost relieved when the government announced that it was banning the meeting.

By the time the ban was announced, it was too late to prevent crowds from gathering in the streets. Large and noisy demonstrations on the evening of the planned banquet, February 22, 1848, continued on the following day. The National Guard, charged with maintaining order but made up of members of the same middle-class groups whose frustration had guaranteed the success of the banquets, showed little energy in controlling them. On the evening of the 23rd, demonstrators clashed with army troops, who opened fire and killed a number of protesters. For militants of the various republican and socialist groups that had suffered under the Guizot regime's repression, these killings provided the means to turn reform protests into a revolution. The victims' bodies were loaded onto carts and hauled around the city. The sight of the corpses spurred the population's anger, and during the night of the 23rd to 24th, barricades blocked the streets in the city's poorer neighborhoods. Louis-Philippe, alarmed by the tide of unrest, had already jettisoned Guizot. But by the time he persuaded Odilon Barrot, a leader of the banquet campaign, to accept the prime ministership on February 24, events had outstripped him. The king tried to abdicate in favor of the young heir to the throne, but the crowds in the streets had already rallied to the slogans of republicanism.

The Provisional Government

Even as the Chamber of Deputies was discussing Louis-Philippe's abdication, a provisional republican government headed by the romantic poet Alphonse de Lamartine, author of a best-selling history of the Revolution of 1789, was being proclaimed at the Hôtel-de-Ville. Although the provisional government's eleven members included a number of bourgeois reformers and only two spokesmen for the lower classes—the socialist writer Louis Blanc and the artisan Albert, a member of one of the secret republican societies—its accession to power meant a sharp break with the constitutional monarchy. As in 1792, the proclamation of the republic meant that France's future would be entrusted to a constituent assembly chosen by universal manhood suffrage. There would be no repetition of 1830, when a small group of politicians and journalists had replaced one monarchical regime with another. And the appeal to universal suffrage meant that peasants, artisans, and workers would far outnumber the educated, property-owning bourgeois voters. The February Revolution suddenly threw the whole future of liberal, bourgeois society into question.

At first, the bourgeoisie seemed resigned to its fate. In Lyon, the prefect simply surrendered his powers to the editors of the local republican newspaper, leaving them to administer the city until a newly appointed government commissioner arrived. In most of the country, the new government took power peacefully and local landowners and notables were initially undisturbed, although there was a wave of violent anti-Semitic riots in Alsace. But the overthrow of the July Monarchy did unleash a torrent of popular political activity. By mid-April, less than two months after the uprising, over 200 clubs, with a total membership of over 100,000, were meeting in Paris, some as often as six times a week. Dozens of hastily founded newspapers, many of them closely associated with clubs, broadcast new ideas to the country at large. Republicans of all persuasions, socialists, feminists, and promoters of Christian democracy all competed for attention. Conservative groups, especially in the provinces, warned of the dangers of disorder and predicted that the new democratic order would soon collapse.

All across the political spectrum, there was agreement that the new revolution required policies to resolve “the social question” and prevent a civil war between hostile classes. The Provisional Government’s efforts to aid the working class while reassuring nervous property owners showed how difficult it was to achieve this objective. To deal with unemployment, which rose sharply because of the uncertainty following the February revolution, the Provisional Government opened National Workshops, where workers were paid a modest wage but frequently had little to do. Conservatives attacked the workshops as a waste of money and as a political danger, since the workers appeared to spend much of their time reading newspapers and discussing socialist ideas. The Provisional Government delegated Louis Blanc to hold public hearings on workers’ problems. He headed a commission that met at the Luxembourg Palace and took extensive testimony from members of a wide variety of trades. To conservatives, the Luxembourg Commission was a dangerous concession to socialism, encouraging the workers to imagine they could bring pressure on the government to solve their problems. To the radical socialist Karl Marx, however, the Luxembourg Commission served merely to ensure that “the representatives of the working class were exiled from the seat of the Provisional Government,” which was left in the hands of the bourgeois republicans.²

The revolution sparked debate on the role of women as well as that of workers. Feminist groups, largely silenced since the early 1830s, reappeared, forming clubs and publishing newspapers—some demanding the right to vote and others linking the cause of women to a general call for social restructuring. Male republicans, and even some prominent women such as George Sand, a close associate of the Provisional Government’s interior minister, Ledru-Rollin, opposed such demands. In Lyon, unemployed female workers demonstrated to be admitted to the National Workshops. But the republican authorities limited them to organizing a door-to-door fundraising drive, accompanied by respectable bourgeois women. The caricaturist Daumier turned his crayon against the radical feminists, mocking their club meetings and lamenting the plight of fathers left at home with crying children. A conservative female author rushed a story entitled “The Young Republicanesses” into print to convince readers that “to be the worthy companion of a true and pure republican” a woman should devote herself above all to being “a wife, a mother ... the good angel of the home.”³

The revolution had immediate effects on France's colonies. In Algeria, civilian settlers demanded an end to arbitrary government by the French army. General Bugeaud's troops had crushed Abd el-Kader's revolt in 1847, but the military regime, concerned about maintaining order, tried to restrain the settlers from taking over most Arabic lands. The Provisional Government sided with the settlers, promising that Algeria would eventually be put under the same laws as metropolitan France. Although this policy of "assimilation" to French conditions would not be fully implemented until the Third Republic, it had major implications for the future of the colony: carrying it out would mean eliminating the traditions and institutions of the territory's Arabic and Berber populations. The Provisional Government, at the urging of the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, also took quick action to decree the immediate end of slavery in France's overseas colonies on April 27, 1848. By the time the decree reached the Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, the local populations had already risen up to demand their freedom, an event vividly recounted in Patrick Chamoiseau's 1992 novel, *Texaco*. The Provisional Assembly's action kept France's new republican government from having to send troops to uphold slaveowners' rights, and ensured that the "old colonies" where slavery had existed would remain loyal to France.

The Provisional Government's most fateful and most controversial decision was to hold national elections for a constituent assembly just two months after the overthrow of Louis-Philippe's government. As they began to organize for the election campaign, the radical and socialist groups in Paris quickly realized how difficult it was to gain support for their ideas across the country in the few short weeks they were allowed. Even within the government, dedicated republicans like Ledru-Rollin—who occupied the crucial Interior Ministry and was in charge of organizing the elections—argued for a postponement so that the millions of new voters could be educated enough to make intelligent choices. But the republicans were trapped by their own political principles. They needed a popular mandate to justify the legitimacy of their own government. Conservative critics denounced the Paris radicals' call for postponing the vote as an effort to install a revolutionary dictatorship. Mass demonstrations organized by the Paris political clubs on March 17 and April 16, 1848, seemed to show the danger of a lower-class insurrection if a government with a firm claim to authority was not quickly installed.

The voting on April 23, 1848, confirmed the Paris radicals' fears. Although thousands of candidates put themselves forward, most voters turned to local dignitaries who were often the only men with any previous political experience. The liberal noble Alexis de Tocqueville wrote a classic description of how he swayed the peasants from his Normandy estate, which gives a vivid sense of how local notables in conservative regions succeeded in influencing the vote:

A circle formed around me, and I said a few words appropriate to the occasion. I reminded these good people of the seriousness and importance of the act they were going to perform; I advised them not to let themselves be accosted or diverted by people who might, when we arrived at the town, seek to deceive them.⁴

In any event, peasant voters needed no coaching from the rich to react against the one measure of the Provisional Government that had affected them the most. To pay for the many expenditures the crisis situation after February had required, the government had imposed a stiff 45 percent tax increase.

The result of the voting in this, France's first genuinely free election under universal male suffrage, was thus paradoxical. The voters picked about 270 moderate republicans who pledged to draft a democratic constitution that would respect the rights of private property, and about 70 to 80 radicals and socialists. But the mostly rural electorate returned over 400 deputies whose real loyalties were to one or another of France's banished ruling dynasties. Supporters of the fallen Orléanists were the most numerous, but there were a number of legitimists loyal to the Bourbons and a few Bonapartists bent on restoring the Empire. For the moment, most of these conservative deputies put aside their divisions over the question of which dynasty to support and coalesced into a "Party of Order," united in their opposition to socialism and concessions to the workers.

The June Days and the Conservative Republic

Although the "Party of Order" dominated the newly elected assembly, more radical groups remained active. Leftwing candidates had won the elections in Paris, and the conservative deputies had to meet in the midst of a restless urban population. The Assembly's majority showed its colors by ousting Louis Blanc and the artisan Albert from the Executive Commission, but the deputies hesitated to close the National Workshops, for fear of sparking a popular uprising.

The radical militants of the Paris clubs, disappointed by the election results, cast about for a way to rally their forces and found it in the sphere of foreign policy. In the wake of the February Revolution, democratic and nationalist uprisings had broken out all over central Europe. The republican and socialist groups in Paris saw an opportunity to counter the conservative tide in France by pressuring the government to put the country at the head of an international crusade for democracy. In this way, republican France would regain the leadership it had exercised during the 1790s. On May 15, 1848, the clubs staged a mass march to demand French aid for the nationalist movement in Poland. Some of the marchers broke into the Assembly's meeting hall, took over the rostrum, and declared the Assembly dissolved, while another group seized Paris's town hall, the Hôtel-de-Ville. The National Guard, largely dominated by middle-class volunteer soldiers, soon regained control of the city, and the radical movement was disrupted by the arrest of many of its leaders. But the incident increased tensions in the capital, convincing both sides that a further showdown was inevitable.

Although the surviving club leaders tried to avoid provoking the authorities after May 15, they were rapidly losing control of their own followers. By-election results showed that the situation was becoming increasingly polarized, with the moderate republicans losing strength to conservatives on one side and socialists on the other. Urban crowds demonstrated against the government in numerous provincial cities, including Limoges, Nantes, and Marseille. Meanwhile, the Bonapartist pretender, Louis-Napoleon, still in exile in England, had allowed his name to be put forward for an Assembly seat and had shown that he could draw votes from both conservatives and radicals for his vaguely outlined program of a strong government independent of all parties. Talk of resolving the social problem gave way among conservatives to an obsession with proving that the government could maintain public order and defeat the socialist and working-class opposition. On June 21, 1848, the Assembly voted to close the National Workshops in Paris. Unmarried

workers would be sent from the capital to work on swamp-draining projects in the Sologne, a notoriously unhealthy region.

The Assembly's action convinced many Paris workers and artisan that the democratic republic their uprising had created in February 1848 was turning against them. As in February, barricades went up in the narrow streets of the capital's crowded working-class quarters. Arrest statistics show that the rebels were a cross section of the city's poorer classes. Some came from the lower reaches of the petty bourgeoisie, some were skilled artisans whose trades were feeling the pressure of industrial competition, some were factory workers, and some were casual laborers or unemployed. Engravings from the period emphasize the fact that women fought alongside the men. Altogether, 50,000 may have taken an active part in the struggle.

The government's strategy was to avoid a repetition of the confused fighting that had allowed the February movement an easy triumph. The revolt was allowed to spread while army troops and artillery prepared a systematic assault. By June 24, most of the poorer neighborhoods in eastern Paris were covered with barricades. But the rebels, whose most capable leaders had been arrested after May 15, lacked direction, and they had been unable to capture key government buildings such as the Hôtel-de-Ville, the symbolic center of the city's government. On the 25th, the army began a bloody reconquest of the city. In several days of fierce fighting, some 3,000 people were killed; the victorious forces of order arrested 15,000 others, many of whom were deported to prison camps in Algeria. Emboldened by their victory, the conservatives in the Assembly voted repressive measures against clubs and newspapers, and tried to pin the blame for the uprising on the prominent socialist and republican leaders. Although the June Days movement had been confined to Paris, provincial authorities now assumed that they had a mandate to harass republican militants and journalists.

To the majority of deputies in the Assembly, the June Days showed the need for a "strong government" that could be trusted to keep the lower orders in their place. They turned leadership of the government over to General Eugène Cavaignac, who had commanded the repression of the June uprising. The deputies of the "Party of Order" turned to the church as well as the army, forcing Cavaignac to appoint an education minister sympathetic to religious influence in the schools. Even before the June Days, the conservative Assembly had rejected a proposal to legalize divorce; after the uprising, it voted to ban women from forming or attending political clubs. Above all, the deputies sought to institutionalize order by designing a constitution with a strong executive branch. Inspired in many ways by the model of the United States, they provided for an elected president with extensive powers, to be balanced by a one-chamber assembly. The president's powers would be limited because he could only have one four-year term. The deputies' only concession to democracy was the retention of universal male suffrage. They hesitated to provoke another desperate uprising by repealing the one essential achievement of the February revolution.

The Constituent Assembly's leaders had assumed that the president elected in the voting called for in December 1848 would be a man loyal to the new system. There was one serious threat: Louis-Napoleon, after scoring several successes as a symbolic protest candidate in by-elections, announced plans to run. The various monarchist factions, determined to keep him out and to defeat the democratic left, put aside any hope of an early restoration and agreed to support General Cavaignac. The leftwing republicans'

candidate was Ledru-Rollin, a member of the original Provisional Government who had avoided association with the June Days uprising. The veteran socialist Raspail represented the extreme left. Lamartine, the poet who had headed the Provisional Government in February, also put himself forward.

Despite the violence earlier in the year, the election campaign was relatively orderly. Cavaignac, with the combined support of the “Party of Order” and the moderate republicans, seemed to be the overwhelming favorite. But the results of the voting on December 10, 1848, were a surprise—indeed, the greatest electoral surprise in French history. As anticipated, the figures identified with the February revolution did poorly. Ledru-Rollin ran a distant third with fewer than 400,000 votes, and Lamartine drew an embarrassing 8,000. But Cavaignac and the “Party of Order” were also rejected; the general won only 1,400,000 votes. The overwhelming victor was Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the nephew of the emperor, who received more than 5,400,000 ballots. Even today, the reasons for his triumph remain disputed. His name was, of course, recognizable to even the most poorly educated voter, and it summoned up memories of a time when France’s glory had been at its peak. He had the advantage of not having taken part in any of the earlier events of the 1848 Revolution, so that he was identified neither with radicalism nor with repression. His vaguely worded proposals reflected some Saint-Simonian influence and a concern for both business and workers. And, in the Bonapartist tradition, he claimed to stand for both order and democracy. Above all, however, the vote for Louis-Napoleon reflected a popular rejection of all the politicians of 1848, the conservatives as well as the radicals.

The Troubled Republic

Three main issues dominated the three years following Louis-Napoleon’s election victory: the conservative legislature’s continuing effort to protect the interests of the wealthy elites that it represented, the steady growth of democratic republicanism in spite of the setbacks of 1848, and the new president’s effort to find a way to remain in office after his four-year term expired in 1852. Initially, the president and the “Party of Order” appeared to be in agreement, although Louis-Napoleon moved quickly in January 1849 to assert that he could pick his own ministers, even if their policies failed to win a majority in the Assembly. The machinery of government continued to be used to repress democratic and socialist propaganda. In the spring of 1849, elections for a new Assembly to replace the Constituent Assembly produced another victory for the “Party of Order.” But radical democratic deputies still formed a significant opposition group, dubbed the *Montagne* in memory of the radical Jacobins of 1793. The radicals, or *démoc-socs* (democratic socialists), did particularly well in urban areas, but the election returns showed that they were now finding support in some rural regions as well. This was particularly true in Alsace, in the Rhône valley, and in some parts of the Massif Central. A feminist militant, Jeanne Deroin, put the issue of women’s rights on the agenda by declaring herself a candidate, even though she could not vote. Recognizing that neither conservatives nor male republicans accepted the idea of equality between the sexes, she argued that the socially valuable labor women performed, in their role as mothers, gave them a claim to representation, but she found little support.

In May 1849, Louis-Napoleon consolidated his alliance with the conservatives when he sent French troops to protect the pope from a republican revolution in Rome, thus placing himself squarely on the side of the Catholic Church. The move outraged the

démoc-soc minority in the Assembly. Led by Ledru-Rollin, 120 deputies signed a manifesto urging a protest demonstration on June 13, 1849. In Paris, the police easily controlled the demonstration, but in Lyon the protest turned into an uprising with barricades and deaths. The government used this pretext to make another wave of arrests of radical and socialist leaders. But the movements in Paris and Lyon showed that there was still strong support for the *démoc-soc* movement.

The Falloux School Law

Aside from outright repression, the conservatives' main response to the spread of democracy involved a systematic effort to inculcate the values of respect for order and social hierarchy into the population. The most significant effort of the "Party of Order" to do this was the passage of the Falloux school law in March 1850. The Falloux law conceded to Catholics the privilege of creating their own schools, thus settling the long-running dispute that had divided religiously minded conservatives from other members of the upper classes throughout the 1840s. Inasmuch as almost all girls' schools were already run by the church, the Falloux law allowed Catholics to create a school system almost as extensive as the public schools. The Falloux law also introduced Catholic religious education in the public schools, breaking with the secularist tradition inaugurated during the Revolution. Children of religious minorities—Protestants and Jewish people—could be exempted from these classes, but the law signaled a new alliance of the church and the French state. Although the Falloux law gave much to the church, it also gave new powers to the government. Control over the school system was firmly centralized in Paris, preventing communes dominated by the leftwing opposition from using the schools to propagate democratic ideas. The law also contributed to the professionalization of teaching by granting instructors a major pay increase.

Restricting Suffrage

In the face of continuing *démoc-soc* successes in off-year elections, the Assembly's conservative majority tried to curtail universal suffrage. A new election law, enacted in May 1850 and aimed at excluding what Thiers called "the vile multitude," required voters to be registered taxpayers and to have had a fixed address for three years. It reduced the number of eligible voters from 9,600,000 to 6,800,000, and marked a retreat from the principles of democracy adopted in 1848. Recognizing the law's unpopularity, Louis-Napoleon ostentatiously distanced himself from it, making it clear that it represented the wishes of the deputies, not his own.

According to the constitution enacted in 1848, the year 1852 was to see two national elections: one for a new Assembly in May and one for the presidency in December. Buoyed by their steady gains in partial elections in 1850 and 1851, the *démoc-soc* forces still expected to take control of the Assembly, a prospect the conservative "Party of Order" anticipated with corresponding alarm. As for Louis-Napoleon, he remained frustrated; repeated efforts to persuade the deputies to amend the constitution to permit him to run for re-election had failed. But the conservatives' fear of the radical republicans offered him another possibility: a coup d'état that would forestall the elections at the price of overturning the constitution. In preparation for such a showdown, the president systematically put men loyal to him in key positions in the government bureaucracy and the army. He also used his considerable

talents as a propagandist to discredit the deputies and put himself forward as the one figure who could give the country strong and stable government.

Louis-Napoleon finally struck on December 2, 1851, the anniversary of his uncle's great military victory at Austerlitz. In a proclamation posted on the walls of Paris, he justified his action by condemning the incompetence of the divided Assembly, and recalling the successes of the First Empire. In a bid to give his new regime an air of legitimacy, he announced that a new constitution would be drawn up and restored universal manhood suffrage, curtailed by the law of May 31, 1850. The police arrested a number of deputies, both leading republicans and prominent Orléanists and legitimists, and top military officers who were not loyal to the president. A small group of parliamentarians led by Victor Hugo issued a call for an insurrection to defend the Republic. For a day, the success of the coup seemed in doubt. Residents of some of the city's poorer neighborhoods built barricades, and respectable bourgeois ostentatiously refused to support the troops. But the army, under the orders of commanders handpicked by Louis-Napoleon, followed orders to destroy the barricades, and the resistance was much more limited than in June 1848. The common people of Paris were not prepared to fight to the death for the conservative Republic.

Triumph in the capital was not enough to assure Louis-Napoleon's success, however. News of the coup set off a major insurrection in the south of France, revealing how extensively republican ideas had penetrated among the peasants and villagers of Provence. At its height, this rural insurrection may have involved more than 100,000 people. Enthusiastic but disorganized, the republicans armed themselves as best they could and marched on the nearest towns, hoping to spread the movement. Hastily summoned troops soon dispersed these columns and arrested hundreds of participants, but the extent of the insurrection showed that the brief interval of the Second Republic had made a lasting change in the political attitudes of the common people in much of rural France. Republican, democratic, and even socialist ideas were no longer confined to the large cities. On the other side, the harsh repression of the uprising identified Louis-Napoleon's regime with conservatism. His gesture in restoring universal suffrage had not been sufficient to capture the support of the lower classes.

Notes

- 1 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*, George Lawrence, trans. (Garden City, GA: Doubleday, 1970), 14.
- 2 Karl Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848–1850* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 41.
- 3 Mme. Adèle Cleret, "Les Jeunes républicaines," in *La Providence, Journal des peuples* (April 1848).
- 4 Tocqueville, *Recollections*, 95.

14 The Second Empire's Decade of Prosperity

In 1851, as in 1799, a Bonaparte overthrew a discredited republican regime and replaced it with an authoritarian one. Like his uncle, Louis-Napoleon was initially able to rely on fairly broad popular support because he promised to put an end to the futile squabbling of the politicians he ousted. The new Napoleon benefited during the first half of his reign from a favorable economic climate, but he also strengthened his position through innovative domestic policies and successful ventures abroad. Not everyone accepted the new Napoleonic order; the regime's police kept a strict watch on the unrepentant republicans, socialists, and legitimists who refused to renounce their ideals. For some ten years, however, the revived Bonapartist regime seemed to have resolved many of the dilemmas that had weakened all the previous postrevolutionary governments.

The Empire's New Clothes

With the opposition to his coup quickly crushed, Louis-Napoleon and his supporters turned to the erection of new institutions that would guarantee his grip on power. The abortive resistance in Paris and the *Midi* insurrection served as pretexts for the arrest of thousands of republican activists throughout the country, the most important of whom were imprisoned or deported to the French colonies. A plebiscite, called for December 2, 1851 and organized by prefects who had been ordered to produce impressive results, duly provided an overwhelming majority in favor of a new constitution. Under it the president would remain in office for ten years and the powers of the legislature, divided once again into two houses, were greatly curtailed. Parliamentary elections in the spring of 1852 produced a compliant Chamber of Deputies, from which the regime's opponents were excluded.

Not since the first Napoleon had one man held so much power in France. Raised abroad, Louis-Napoleon was an outsider to his own country. Before 1848, his only period of residence there had been a term in the prison-fortress of Ham after his unsuccessful coup attempt in 1840. Years in exile and in prison had taught him to keep his true thoughts to himself and to rely on a small group of loyal followers. The future emperor was not lacking in intelligence, and the pamphlets he had written before 1848 had shown that he was interested in new ideas, particularly Saint-Simonian proposals for overcoming poverty and social conflict through planned economic expansion. His successful campaign in 1848 and his ability in outmaneuvering the parliamentary politicians afterward revealed a combination of unscrupulousness and genuine political skills. To the end of his reign, however, he kept his true intentions to himself, making it

difficult for contemporaries and historians to make sense of what often seemed to be inconsistent policies.

Freed from concern about political opposition, Louis-Napoleon sought to demonstrate that his authoritarian rule could produce results that the parliamentary Republic had been unable to achieve. In particular, he wanted to restore business confidence and promote economic prosperity. The government took an active role in encouraging negotiations between the railroad companies (many of which had been in severe difficulty since the mid-1840s) and bankers that pushed the national rail network toward completion. Government assurances to business revived the stock market and made capital for industrial expansion more available. The modest economic recovery that had begun after the crisis of 1848 turned into a sustained boom that continued through most of the 1850s. This wave of prosperity helped reconcile both businessmen and workers to the Bonapartist regime.

The revised constitution approved in December 1851 and the title of Prince-President did not satisfy Louis-Napoleon's ambitions to make his regime permanent. In 1852, he undertook an extensive speaking tour of the French provinces to lay the groundwork for the restoration of the Napoleonic Empire. To the French people, Louis-Napoleon claimed that he alone could bring unity, "because I don't belong to any family of ideologues." To governments in the rest of Europe, whose memories of the first Napoleon were anything but reassuring, the president promised that "the Empire means peace": France had no desire for conquests. The nation's energies would be fully occupied, he claimed, with an extensive program of public works.¹ On November 20, 1852, a second plebiscite—by a vote of 7,800,000 yes to 250,000 no—approved the restoration of the hereditary Napoleonic Empire. Out of respect for Napoleon I's son, who had died in 1832, Louis-Napoleon called himself Napoleon III.

The prefects' success in producing an overwhelming vote in favor of the new Empire could not mask the persistence of opposition to the regime. Many of the business-minded bourgeois notables who had held power under the July Monarchy accepted positions under the Empire, but their true loyalties remained with the Orleans dynasty and the parliamentary system under which they had enjoyed political power. Similarly, the wealthy legitimist landowners who dominated many regions of the west continued to dream of a Bourbon restoration. The urban working class, unrepresented in the government, kept its faith in republican and socialist ideas, and the petty-bourgeois supporters of the 1848 republic were equally unpersuaded by imperial propaganda. A few prominent Orleanists and moderate republicans, such as Adolphe Thiers and Victor Hugo, were driven into exile, from where they denounced a regime whose power, they claimed, was based on naked force. Over the course of his reign, Napoleon III alternated between efforts to win over devotees of different opposition groups and policies of repression. He succeeded at times in converting many opponents to a pragmatic acceptance of his policies, but he never won them over to genuine loyalty to himself and his system.

Prosperity

During the 1850s, the emperor had two major advantages in seeking to consolidate his power. The institutions he had recreated allowed him to act with considerably more decisiveness than the parliamentary governments of the July Monarchy and the Second

Republic. The Empire also benefited during the 1850s from a surge of economic prosperity. The causes of this were partly fortuitous. Major gold discoveries in California and Australia gave the entire world economy a much-needed stimulus; the Californian gold rush inspired over 20,000 French immigrants to move to the United States, the largest influx until the late twentieth century. But Louis-Napoleon's policies provided additional impetus to economic expansion during the 1850s. Only after 1860 did business confidence begin to flag. While industrial growth was the most prominent feature of the Second Empire, the period was also one of general prosperity for French agriculture. French farmers enjoyed a succession of mostly good harvests and a period of high prices that contrasted sharply with the severe difficulties that were to descend on the countryside after 1870.

The economic expansion of the 1850s was in most respects a continuation of the process of industrialization that had begun in the early 1840s, before the interruption of the 1845 depression and the Revolution of 1848. The completion of the national railroad network in the 1850s stimulated the whole economy. Industrial expansion, which was most dramatic in basic industries such as iron making, averaged 3.9 percent a year between 1850 and 1855, a pace only slightly lower than that of the boom years in the early 1840s. The railroads lowered transportation costs, encouraging growth in other branches of industry as well. When the railroad reached the traditional porcelain manufacturing city of Limoges in 1856, for example, it enabled local manufacturers to lower their costs by importing coal for fuel in place of wood. It also enabled them to aim at a national and even an international market. As a result, formerly cautious entrepreneurs were willing to invest to expand and modernize their factories.

To what extent was this economic growth the result of Napoleon III's policies? The emperor frequently spoke about the importance of promoting prosperity, and his youthful writings showed the influence of Saint-Simonian ideas about economic planning. His advisors included a number of men who had participated directly in the Saint-Simonian movement, such as the economist Michel Chevalier. In 1852, Louis-Napoleon decreed the construction of a Palace of Industry to showcase French technological achievements, and the lavish international expositions held in Paris in 1855 and 1867 gave pride of place to French manufactures. Unlike some twentieth-century French governments, however, Napoleon III's regime did not attempt to create a planned, government-directed economy, relying instead on the initiative of private entrepreneurs. Even the Palace of Industry, encouraged by the government, was run by a private corporation. But the Second Empire did stimulate private economic initiative in a number of ways. Prior to 1848, the French banking system had remained conservative and old-fashioned. Businessmen often had trouble borrowing money for expansion. The imperial regime encouraged the establishment of new banks, more attuned to business needs, such as the *Crédit Mobilier*—the creation of the Pereire brothers, two aggressive entrepreneurs and former Saint-Simonians. Government guarantees encouraged private bankers to lend to the railroad companies and thus fostered their growth. And the government spent heavily on public works projects, most notably in the capital, thus creating employment and a demand for building materials.

Haussmann's Rebuilding of Paris

The rebuilding of Paris illustrated the extent and the limits of Napoleon III's promotion of economic modernization and development. Napoleon III, who fancied himself

something of an architect, personally sketched plans for massive rebuilding projects and a network of widened boulevards. The actual execution of his projects was carried out by Georges Haussmann, a civil engineer and career administrator who had caught the emperor's eye by his success in promoting the plebiscite in favor of the Empire in 1852. In June 1853, Haussmann took over as prefect of the Seine Department, and during the next decade and a half, he oversaw the transformation of the capital. Working from the bottom up, Haussmann installed underground storm sewers and water pipes to prevent the periodic flooding of Paris's low-lying neighborhoods and to provide clean water, brought via aqueducts from rural areas as much as 60 miles away. At ground level, Haussmann gave the city wide new boulevards. They not only facilitated traffic movement, but also served as a pretext for the demolition of some of the city's worst slum neighborhoods. Haussmann imposed regulations that required that buildings constructed along the new boulevards be of uniform height and design. He thus gave modern Paris its characteristic appearance. Along with new streets, Haussmann dealt with many other urban problems. For example, he oversaw the construction of a great central food market, *Les Halles*, one of the first major building projects to use iron-frame construction. It allowed for better supervision of the city's food supplies and the reduction of health hazards.

Haussmann's Paris became a model for the reshaping of cities throughout the world. As critics at the time and since have pointed out, however, he paid little attention to upgrading the quality of housing provided in the new buildings along his boulevards. He did not even make installation of indoor plumbing mandatory, and many tight-fisted landlords refused to pay for it. Nor did he do anything to mitigate the social effects of his massive rebuilding scheme. Poor Parisians found themselves unable to pay the increased rents in new buildings and often had to move to cheap housing on the outskirts of the city. Haussmann's operations thereby brought about an increase in social segregation. The grumbling of the poor and of city dwellers who lamented the disappearance of the colorful older neighborhoods in the city center did not affect Haussmann, but the methods by which he financed his projects and the profits raked in by real estate speculators whose connections allowed them to acquire property along the new boulevards left him open to criticism. By the late 1860s, Haussmann's financial arrangements had become the subject of intense political controversy. Jules Ferry, a future leader of the Third Republic, published newspaper articles denouncing the scandal of "so many millions in the hands of a single man,"² and, although Haussmann was never proven to have been personally corrupt, he was finally removed from office in January 1870 when the regime sought to refurbish its image. The story of Haussmann's work in Paris was representative of many aspects of the Empire as a whole. In retrospect, Napoleon III and Haussmann could claim credit for taking crucial steps to make Paris a modern, livable city. But they had done so without much concern for social consequences. The rebuilding of the capital had favored the rich and increased the gap between workers and bourgeoisie.

The Accumulation of Wealth

The social divisions exacerbated by the rebuilding of Paris were characteristic of the Second Empire. It was a period in which society was more dominated by unabashed wealth than at any other time in French history. The tone was set in part by the emperor's immediate entourage. From his days in exile, he had relied

heavily on a small circle of faithful supporters. These men, social outsiders who had cast their lot with Louis-Napoleon at a time when the Bonapartist cause seemed hopeless, were none too scrupulous about enriching themselves once they came to power. The emperor's determination to encourage the growth of industry favored the enrichment of the bourgeoisie, too. Alexis de Tocqueville, the liberal noble who had forecast the 1848 Revolution, complained that the Napoleonic regime fostered "love of gain, a fondness for business careers, the desire to get rich at all costs, a craving for material comfort and easy living."³ Certainly wealth became the most important criterion of social status. Like his uncle, Napoleon III made no distinction between families whose fortune was rooted in the past and those who had only recently enriched themselves.

The bourgeois elite who dominated the Second Empire tended to become an increasingly closed group after 1848. Earlier in the century, it had been easier for men from humble backgrounds to accumulate the wealth that would allow them to claim bourgeois status, but now inherited positions became more significant. The growing importance of secondary education, for example, favored the sons of families who were able to afford long years of schooling for their children. As the size of industrial firms became larger and the capital invested in them greater, it became correspondingly more difficult for newcomers to compete with established "bourgeois dynasties." Carefully arranged intermarriages among wealthy families preserved fortunes and ensured their transmission from generation to generation.

While their menfolk concentrated on building the family fortune, the women of this bourgeois elite, freed from the economic responsibilities their grandmothers and mothers shared with their husbands, surrounded themselves with expensive furnishings and possessions in the ever-more-ornate homes that were a sign of bourgeois status. Napoleon III's consort, the beautiful and intensely Catholic Eugénie, whom he had wooed and married in 1853, set a tone that other women sought to imitate. Constructed in new neighborhoods removed from the squalor of working-class slums and the grime of factories, the homes of the wealthy advertised the status of their inhabitants. In them women could live out the domestic, family-oriented lifestyle associated with bourgeois rank, devoting themselves to the rearing of their children and the supervision of servants who did the actual work of the household.

While the bourgeoisie was thus accumulating and displaying wealth on an unprecedented scale, the industrial working class continued to live in poverty. The short-lived revolutionary episode of 1848 had done much to convince urban workers that they were a coherent group with distinct interests and to alienate them from a society that seemed indifferent to their problems. The imperial regime proclaimed its sympathy for workers and promoted paternalist initiatives such as employer-sponsored model housing projects (few of which were built). It also encouraged the formation of mutual aid societies, which attracted primarily better-paid workers in the more skilled industries. But these initiatives failed to win the workers' loyalty.

Socialism Gains Support

Despite governmental repression, socialist ideas continued to gain adherents among the workers. The most important socialist theorist of the Second Empire period was Pierre Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon denounced the exploitative capitalist and industrial

system, and called for a “mutualist” society based on workers’ cooperatives that would exchange goods and services with one another.

“Society,” Proudhon wrote, “must be thought of ... [as] a system in which all individuals are guaranteed the same rights provided they perform the same duties, one in which they will receive the same benefits in return for the same services rendered.”⁴

A mutualist society would have no need for a bureaucratic state, and Proudhon ridiculed those socialists, such as Louis Blanc, who had tried to improve workers’ conditions through state action in 1848. Under Blanc’s system of government-run workshops, Proudhon wrote, “we would simply have exchanged our present chains for others.”⁵

Proudhon’s mutualist and anarchist ideas spoke to those French workers who still saw themselves as economic individualists, needing only protection from the unfair competition of large industries and banks. The Proudhonists were strongly opposed to the “scientific” socialist doctrines being articulated at that same time by the German communist thinker Karl Marx from his London exile. Marx, unlike Proudhon, accepted the progress of industrialization and urged workers to engage in mass political action. As Marx’s ideas began to penetrate into France during the 1860s, French socialism became increasingly divided over these basic issues.

Socialist doctrines promised workers a better future, but conditions in the 1850s drove them to find ways to protect their immediate interests. Despite efforts to teach their workers “proper” habits of timeliness, thrift, and sobriety, employers complained that all too many of them refused to submit to workplace discipline and showed an incorrigible contempt for bourgeois values. Manufacturer Denis Poulot (a selfmade man) wrote a book giving a highly colored account of the outrages these independent-minded workers perpetrated on their uncomprehending employers. Behind Poulot’s litany of complaints we can see the reality of a working-class world that held to its own values and its own ways of life.

Entertainment and Culture

In the cultural domain, the Second Empire was marked by two significant tendencies. The official culture of the day stressed elegantly crafted entertainment and lavish spectacle, divorced from any consideration of the period’s social problems. In the shadow of this glittering carnival, small coteries of writers and artists created a counterculture that challenged the values of the regime and of the wealthy bourgeoisie who benefited from it. Jacques Offenbach’s successful operettas, such as *La Belle Hélène* and *La Vie Parisienne*, which combined theater, singing, and dance in a looser manner than traditional grand opera, typified the conventional culture of the period. Featuring sprightly melodies and humorous plots, Offenbach’s works were the antithesis of the ultra-serious operas that German composer Richard Wagner was creating in the same period. They seemed to confirm the stereotype of French culture as frivolous and slightly immoral.

The desire to appeal to a wide audience was especially evident in the press. Polydore Millaud’s *Petit Journal*, launched in the 1860s, made the daily newspaper accessible to workers and peasants. The *Petit Journal* emphasized sensational crime stories and other

apolitical events. Its price of five centimes allowed it to reach a level of circulation no previous French periodical had ever enjoyed (259,000 sales per day by 1865) and to inaugurate the age of the mass press and mass culture in France.

Alongside these triumphs of mass entertainment and mass culture, the Second Empire saw a growing estrangement between serious writers and artists and society. The regime was not hospitable to innovative experiments, although some of the emperor's entourage, such as his cousin Mathilde—who kept a lively salon—cultivated contacts with intellectuals who refused to embrace orthodoxy. In 1857, the novelist Gustave Flaubert's realistic depiction of provincial bourgeois life, *Madame Bovary*, was banned because of its supposed immoral influence. Flaubert's heroine, driven first to adultery and then to suicide by the boredom and superficiality of her life as the wife of a rural doctor, challenged the conventional values of French society, and the author and publisher paid the price. A similar fate befell Charles Baudelaire, the period's most original poet, after he published *Fleurs du Mal*, in which many of the poems dealt overtly with sexual themes. Visual artists fared no better. Gustave Courbet, the master of realism, had to set up a private exhibition of his two large paintings, *Funeral at Ornans* and *The Artist's Studio*, after they were excluded from the official exhibition held in conjunction with the 1855 international exposition. Today, the two pictures are among the most-prized treasures of Paris's Musée d'Orsay, the French museum of nineteenth-century art.

Not surprisingly, the Second Empire promoted a version of national memory centered around the achievements of Napoleon I. The first Napoleon had successfully pressured the Catholic church to canonize an obscure figure as "Saint Napoleon," and to declare August 15 a holiday in his honor. Under Napoleon III, Saint Napoleon's day became the main national holiday, devoted to recalling the military victories of the First Empire and the founder of the Bonaparte dynasty. Opponents of the regime expressed their sentiments by staying away from the official ceremonies, but most of the population welcomed the band concerts and dances that followed the more formal parades and speeches. While official memory celebrated the country's unity, the period also saw the beginnings of efforts to create regional countermemories that questioned the existence of a single national past. In 1854, the poet Frédéric Mistral created the *Félibrige*, an association devoted to reviving the Provencal language of southern France that had been displaced by French. By the 1860s, his movement was calling for autonomy for his region.

Foreign Adventures

From the outset of his reign, Napoleon III had counted on successes abroad as one way to solidify domestic support. Acquiring colonies outside of Europe was not his highest priority, but he continued to send troops to strengthen French control of Algeria, where resistance against French occupation remained strong throughout the 1850s. The European population had increased, in part as a result of the deportation of political prisoners from France. Like American pioneers on the western frontier, French settlers wanted to push the supposedly uncivilized "natives" out of their way and grab their land. In 1861, a settler newspaper wrote, "In our view, there is only one interest in Africa that deserves respect: that of the colonist."⁶ Visits to Algeria in the 1860s led Napoleon III to express a certain sympathy for the Muslim population, an attitude that put him at odds with the European immigrants

and led most of them to side with the republican opposition movement. Algeria was not the only area of French colonial expansion under the Second Empire. In 1853, France took control of New Caledonia, in the South Pacific, which was used as a penal colony. Starting in 1856, French forces, hoping to make the region's rivers into routes for trade with China, began establishing control over Annam and Cochinchina, territories that are now part of Vietnam. Indochina would remain a major focus of French imperial ambitions for the next century.

Together with France's older colonies in the Caribbean, South America, the west coast of Africa, the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon in the North Atlantic, and Réunion in the Indian Ocean, these new acquisitions meant that France now occupied territories in all major regions of the world. A law passed in 1854 created the legal framework that would govern French colonial rule until 1946. It specified that French domestic laws did not apply overseas, and gave the government freedom to impose taxes and regulations in the colonies as it saw fit. In the Caribbean and Indian Ocean colonies, where the Second Republic had abolished slavery in 1848, the Empire severely limited the rights of black and mixed-race citizens, denying them the right to vote and imposing labor rules meant to keep them working on the islands' plantations.

In Europe, Napoleon III moved quickly to show that France would no longer accept the limitations imposed by the 1815 peace settlement. In 1853, Russia alarmed both Britain and France by seeking increased influence over the Ottoman Empire. France and Britain were concerned about the balance of power in that region and unwilling to let Russia gain exclusive control of Christian holy sites in Palestine. Although his cooperation with the traditional enemy, England, was not popular, Napoleon III seized the opportunity to demonstrate France's strength. Britain and France declared war on the Ottomans in March 1854, and dispatched an expeditionary force to the Crimea, in the Black Sea. Napoleon III, who had initially planned to command his troops in person, had hoped for a quick and striking victory. Instead, the allied forces bogged down in a prolonged siege of the fortress city of Sebastopol, which finally fell in September 1855. By then, fear of a widened conflict made Paris and London eager to take up Russian offers to negotiate. Even if the war failed to produce a dramatic military success like the first Napoleon's campaigns, French forces were victorious, and in January 1856, the emperor was able to convene a great peace conference in Paris. France obtained no territorial gains from the Crimean War, but Napoleon III had reasserted the country's claim to be Europe's leading power.

One important feature of the Paris peace conference was a discussion of the possibility of creating a unified Italy. At the peace conference, Napoleon III, who had spent much of his youth in the peninsula, gave the Piedmontese leader, Camillo Cavour, the opportunity to state his case for unification, although the Austrians, who controlled much of northern Italy, blocked any action on the issue. For Napoleon III, support for Italy offered an opportunity to identify France with the forces of nationalism and liberalism, and a way to overturn the international order created by the Congress of Vienna without reviving France's image as a ruthless conqueror. The Italian nationalist movement was identified with hostility to the pope and the Catholic Church, however, because unification implied abolition of the Papal States. French conservatives thus opposed support for Cavour. For several years after the Paris peace congress, Napoleon III hesitated to take any clear initiatives in Italy.

In January 1858, an Italian nationalist exile, Felice Orsini, made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the emperor outside the Paris Opera. Orsini was condemned to death, but Napoleon III decided the moment had come to force the Italian issue. He arranged to have Orsini sign a letter promising the emperor that if he aided Italian unification, “the blessings of its twenty-five million citizens will follow him through the ages.”⁷ In July 1858, Napoleon III held a secret meeting with Cavour at the French summer resort of Plombières. The two agreed to provoke a war against Austria that would lead to formation of a Kingdom of Italy in the northern half of the peninsula. In exchange, France would receive the Piedmontese territories of Nice and Savoy, which had been annexed during the revolutionary era but returned to Italian rule after 1814. The Austrians recognized that conflict was inevitable and started hostilities in April 1859. Napoleon III hastened to the battlefield in northern Italy, determined to show that he, like his uncle, could be successful at war as well as at politics.

As in the Crimea, French forces were successful but not overwhelmingly so, and Napoleon III certainly did not impose himself as a military genius. At Magenta, the Franco-Piedmontese forces won an initial victory that gave them control of the Lombard capital of Milan. The subsequent battle of Solferino, the costliest encounter of the war, was another French victory. But the number of deaths, the threat of Prussian intervention, and the lack of firm public support for the war in France convinced the emperor to bring the campaign to an end. On July 11, 1859, Napoleon III and the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph negotiated the armistice of Villafranca. Austria agreed to Piedmontese annexation of Lombardy and several other north Italian states, and France withdrew from the war. Cavour was outraged; Napoleon III had promised him to continue fighting until Austria was entirely driven out of northern Italy, but Villafranca left the city of Venice in Austrian hands. Events soon outran Napoleon III’s plans, however. In the middle of 1860, a popular insurrection in southern Italy sparked by the nationalist hero Giuseppe Garibaldi gave Cavour the opportunity to add both the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples—territories excluded from the agreement with France—to the new Kingdom of Italy. French intervention had been decisive in breaking Austria’s hold on the Italian peninsula, but the end result showed that Napoleon III, rather than controlling events and demonstrating French power, had set in motion forces that he could not restrain. In many ways, the Italian conflict was symbolic of the problems in which the regime found itself increasingly trapped in the 1860s.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Maurice Agulhon, *1848 ou l'apprentissage de la république* (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 222.
- 2 Cited in David Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958), 200.
- 3 Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Stuart Gilbert, trans. (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1955), xiii.
- 4 Proudhon, *On the Political Capacity of the Working Classes*, cited in S. Edwards, ed., *Selected Writings of P.-J. Proudhon*, E. Fraser, trans. (New York: Doubleday-Anchor, 1969), 59.
- 5 Ibid., 61.
- 6 Cited in C.-A. Julien, *Histoire de l'Algérie contemporaine* (Paris, 1964), 1:406.
- 7 Cited in J. M. Thompson, *Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire* (New York: Norton, 1955), 179.

15 The Second Empire in Difficulties

In 1860, Napoleon III's Empire appeared to be the most successful regime France had known since 1815; ten years later, it crumbled in a single day. Long before then, however, difficulties had begun to accumulate for the emperor. Just as Napoleon III's achievements in the 1850s had resulted from a combination of his policies and favorable conditions, so the problems of the subsequent decade were due partly to the regime's own failings and partly to circumstances beyond its control. Not that the emperor's policy initiatives after 1860 were all ill-advised. Many of his problems resulted, in fact, from controversial reforms meant to adapt France more quickly to the modern world. But the painful national humiliation that ended the Second Empire has colored attitudes toward it ever since, and Napoleon III cannot be entirely cleared of responsibility for the disaster that ruined his regime's reputation.

Domestic Policies in the Empire's Second Decade

In the 1850s, economic prosperity and foreign policy successes had given the regime a firm base of support, particularly among the wealthier classes. After 1860, a more troubled economic climate, a less favorable international situation, and a widening gap between the articulate members of French society and the government contributed to the weakening of Napoleon III's regime. Unlike many authoritarian rulers, the emperor responded to these challenges with some genuine reforming initiatives until, by 1870, the Empire had taken on the form of a democratically based constitutional monarchy. Paradoxically, these reforms gave the regime's opponents greater opportunities to attack it, weakening its prospects of long-term survival.

The end of the economic boom of the 1850s coincided with one of Napoleon III's most controversial initiatives, a liberal trade treaty with England. The treaty, worked out in secret negotiations between the two trade representatives Richard Cobden and Michel Chevalier, was implemented in 1860. The Cobden-Chevalier treaty represented a major shift in French economic policy. From the time of the Restoration, high tariffs had sheltered French manufacturers from low-priced foreign competition, particularly that of the British with their advanced factories. In France, economists of the liberal school and Saint-Simonian advocates of industrial progress—Chevalier being notable among them—had consistently argued that this policy protected inefficient producers and discouraged the adoption of modern methods in France. Napoleon III, who had been impressed with the virtues of free trade during his stays in England, was sensitive to these arguments, and during the 1850s the government had created loopholes in France's protectionist wall to allow the import of low-priced English iron products

needed to build the French railroad system. His government followed up the Cobden-Chevalier treaty by making similar agreements with eleven other European countries and several Asian powers and entering into a “Latin monetary union” with its neighbors. The French engineer Ferdinand de Lesseps directed the construction of the Suez Canal, opened in 1869, which facilitated international trade by shortening the sea route between Europe and Asia.

French manufacturers did not share Napoleon III’s enthusiasm for free trade. They argued that the British edge in manufacturing technology was so massive that French firms could not compete successfully against them. French businessmen complained that the treaty’s rewards went disproportionately to the British, who exported more to France but did not increase their purchases of French products and who benefitted more from the Suez Canal, which gave them quicker access to their colony on India, than France did. The regime’s policies thus alienated a good part of the business class, even though the government continued to carry out important reforms that benefited manufacturers. Old laws that had restricted the formation of joint-stock companies and hindered industrial expansion were reformed in 1863 and 1867, encouraging greater use of the stock market to raise capital. But the regime, beset with difficulties in other areas, faced increasingly severe economic problems by the end of the 1860s. The 1867 bankruptcy of the Pereire brothers’ *Crédit Mobilier*, the symbol of the Empire’s devotion to economic expansion, was a particularly embarrassing failure.

The regime’s gestures in favor of the industrial working class after 1860 were another reason why it lost some of its popularity among businessmen. Napoleon III, the one-time admirer of Saint-Simonianism, had always claimed that his regime would produce benefits for workers. During the 1850s, he had done little beyond promoting economic growth, which meant more jobs and somewhat higher wages. In the 1860s, however, the regime took several initiatives that helped promote the growth of an autonomous workers’ movement. The French government paid for several French workers’ delegates to attend the 1862 International Exposition in London. There, they met with English socialists, came into contact with Marx’s doctrines, and helped pave the way for formation of the latter’s International Working Men’s Association in 1864. Aware of the imbalance between the power of employers and that of their workers, Napoleon III legalized the formation of labor unions in 1864. Although various forms of worker organizations had existed throughout the nineteenth century, the Le Chapelier law of 1791 had made them all technically illegal. The new law regularized their existence, although it did not require employers to bargain with them. The year 1864 also saw French workers’ first effort since 1848 to run their own election candidates, with the issuing of the “Manifesto of the Sixty” in Paris’s municipal elections. As the 1860s drew to a close, workers made increasing use of their right to organize and staged a growing number of labor strikes, the largest wave of economic protest France had known up to that time. Rather than winning workers’ loyalty, Napoleon III’s efforts at reform had served primarily to encourage them to be more aggressive in asserting their own interests.

The Republican Counterculture

The collapse of the Second Republic in 1851 was a setback for those who believed in the ideal of republican government, but few of them were won over to Bonapartist authoritarianism. In the more liberal atmosphere of the early 1860s, a republican

counterculture hostile to the Empire gained strength in a number of institutions that were not completely under government control. Freemasons, university students in Paris's Latin Quarter, small businessmen who felt unrepresented by the conservative elite that dominated the official Chamber of Commerce, Jews, and liberal Protestants were among the groups that both espoused republican ideas and adopted democratic and anti-elitist practices within their own organizations. Lawyers, who had successfully resisted the regime's efforts to regiment their profession in the 1850s, were a hotbed of opposition. Léon Gambetta, who would become the main strategist of the republicans' rise to power in the 1870s, was just one of many future politicians who launched their careers representing opponents of the Empire in court cases during the 1860s. Dissident artists barred from the government-sponsored official *salons*, or exhibitions, including many of the impressionists, were another group that showed strong republican sympathies.

The republicans argued that the authoritarian imperial regime stifled freedom and creativity in every aspect of French life. By putting control of the university in the hands of advocates of Victor Cousin's outdated eclectic philosophy, the regime was preventing the teaching of modern scientific theories. Its patronage of conservative painters ignored the experiments of original artists like Edouard Manet and Claude Monet, whose art reflected the realities of modern life. The republicans argued that the luxury of the imperial court and the extravagances of Empress Eugénie spread immorality. By contrast, they called for a reform of family life. Women should be given a secular education that would allow them to be intelligent companions to their husbands, and husbands, while retaining dominant authority in their families, should show consideration for their wives and affection for their children.

The Legislature and Elections of 1863

The different currents of opposition to the Empire were able to express themselves with increasing force after 1860 because of a process of liberalization that the regime itself had set in motion. An opposition group had appeared in the Chamber of Deputies in 1857, when five deputies hostile to the regime had nonetheless sworn the constitutional oath and taken their seats, in order to use their positions to criticize the government. In 1859, the emperor granted an amnesty to republican militants who had opposed him in 1851. The following year, he gave the legislature several important new rights. The deputies were permitted to hold a public debate in response to the emperor's speech setting out the government's program at the beginning of each session, and newspapers were allowed to publish accounts of legislative debates that had previously been held in secret. An edict in 1861, a response to criticism of the regime's free-spending habits, gave the legislature the power to impose restrictions on expenses. The Second Empire was beginning to evolve from an authoritarian to a parliamentary regime.

The national parliamentary elections held in 1863 showed that the main beneficiaries of this evolution were the government's opponents. Various opposition groups—Catholic conservatives angered by the government's support for the new anticlerical regime in Italy, businessmen resentful about the Cobden-Chevalier treaty, republicans who wanted a genuinely democratic government—won three times as many votes as they had in the previous elections of 1857. The republican movement scored striking successes that embarrassed the regime severely in Paris and France's other major cities. Adolphe Thiers, the former Orléanist leader, who

favored the restoration of a genuinely representative parliamentary government, won a seat. Among the emperor's closest advisors there was disagreement on what to do. The duc de Morny (Napoleon III's illegitimate half-brother and one of the more imaginative Bonapartists) advocated an effort to rejuvenate the regime by winning over some of the opposition leaders. Morny's death in 1865 left the emperor under the sway of more cautious advisers who refused to embrace the logical consequences of the liberalizing reforms and give members of the opposition positions of responsibility. The regime thus remained suspended uneasily between conflicting policies of reform and authoritarianism.

The Cultural Climate

The gradual loosening of political restrictions imposed in the 1850s was reflected in the increasing vitality of the period's artistic and intellectual currents. Paris in the 1860s was the birthplace of what is now recognized as modern painting. By the middle of the decade, a group of experimentally minded painters emerged, led by Edouard Manet. Manet's paintings challenged artistic conventions both in their style and subject matter. The female nudes in his *Picnic on the Grass* and *Olympia* were depicted realistically and in modern settings, rather than being idealized figures in classical or exotic frameworks that distanced them from the viewer. Critics objected to the flatness of Manet's figures and his bold and sometimes arbitrary use of color. It was precisely these controversial characteristics that made Manet one of the founders of modern art. By the end of the 1860s, he had become the center of a group of painters that included many of the future leaders of the impressionist school, such as Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro.

At the same time as artists were challenging aesthetic conventions, intellectuals were undermining accepted philosophic certainties. The sentimental and often religiously tinged romanticism of the 1840s gave way to a new faith in science, often labeled "positivism." The doctrines of positivism had been elaborated in the 1830s and 1840s by Auguste Comte, a highly original disciple of Saint-Simon. Comte maintained that human thought had progressed from a primitive, mythological stage (in which natural and social phenomena were explained in religious terms), to a more sophisticated metaphysical stage (in which they were attributed to abstract causes). The final stage of human development, which Comte saw emerging in the nineteenth century, was what he labeled positivism, in which metaphysical doctrines gave way to evidence-based scientific explanations. Comte himself, after his early flirtation with Saint-Simon, had become a conservative defender of social hierarchy and a firm supporter of the Second Empire. During the 1850s, he even promoted his own positivist religion, with himself in the role of pope. But his ideas about the inevitable progress of scientific knowledge attracted many radicals, who saw in them a weapon against religious obscurantism. Among the most prominent of these radical positivists were the linguist Emile Littré, whose writings influenced the generation of republican politicians who would eventually consolidate the Third Republic after Napoleon III's downfall, and the philosopher Ernest Renan. Renan caused one of the period's great public scandals when, at his inaugural lecture at the *Collège de France* in 1862, he proclaimed that Jesus should be seen as "a remarkable man," but not as a divine being. Renan's humanistic interpretation of the founder of Christianity, incorporated in his best-selling *Life of Jesus* (1863), led to dismissal from his post in 1864. The government's

treatment of men such as Littré and Renan seemed to argue that support for the Second Empire was incompatible with independent, critical thinking. Positivism became associated with opposition to the regime.

The success of positivism was related to the very real progress in scientific knowledge that marked the period. Although French science was no longer as dominant as it had been at the beginning of the century (French researchers regularly lamented that they lacked laboratories to rival those at the leading German universities), men like biologist Louis Pasteur continued to make major contributions to knowledge. Pasteur's first great discoveries were made in the 1850s, and he continued to work until the 1880s. His demonstration that processes of fermentation and decay were caused by microscopic organisms had important practical consequences for brewers and wine makers. His conclusive proof that living organisms were not the result of spontaneous generation ended a centuries-old debate among biologists. A deeply religious man himself, Pasteur nevertheless contributed to a growing sense that the human mind was capable of explaining and controlling the forces of nature, without reference to theology.

In its early years, the Napoleonic regime had strongly supported the Catholic church, maintaining the Falloux law that provided for religious education in the public schools and keeping French troops stationed in Rome to defend the pope against the Italian nationalists. The Revolution of 1848 had turned the church in a conservative direction. The generation of Catholic liberal leaders who had represented it under the July Monarchy was increasingly challenged by proponents of a more militant Catholicism that rejected any compromise with modern political and intellectual ideas. Journalist Louis Veuillot's *L'Univers* was the main organ for this Ultramontane group. The group was often in closer agreement with the highly conservative Pope Pius IX than with leading members of the French clerical hierarchy. Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*, a vehement condemnation of liberal, democratic, socialist, and positivist principles, issued in 1864, was aimed specifically at French Catholic liberals, whom the pope condemned for too easily accepting modern ideas that went counter to traditional Catholic teachings.

While educated Catholics argued over the degree to which the church should accommodate to new realities, the faithful—especially women, who made up the bulk of Catholic congregations—were drawn to forms of worship that emphasized direct and emotional contact with Jesus, through the cult of the Sacred Heart, and with the Virgin Mary. In 1858, a peasant girl in southern France, Bernadette Soubirous, had a series of visions of the Virgin in a grotto near the town of Lourdes, which soon became the site of mass pilgrimages. Shrugged off by skeptical males, the Lourdes cult appealed strongly to female worshippers whose emotional needs were ignored in the positivist doctrines of the period. By the end of the Second Empire, the Catholic church, which had at times seemed open to an alliance with the democratic movement during the July Monarchy, had defined itself in clear opposition to the new ideas associated with the Revolution of 1789 and the rise of modern science and thought.

Napoleon III's government, while never hostile to the church, found itself increasingly driven to separate itself from the antimodernist thrust of Ultramontanism. From 1863 to 1869, Victor Duruy, the minister of education, made a major effort to modernize every level of French schooling. He updated the secondary school curriculum for boys, trying to put more emphasis on understanding than on memorization and

introducing new subjects, such as modern history, that were directly related to the problems of contemporary life. In 1867, he challenged the church and much of public opinion by attempting to introduce state-supported secondary schools for girls. This reform was soon scuttled, but another Duruy law did make the establishment of girls' elementary schools obligatory. It would be left to the Second Empire's successors to introduce compulsory free public education for all French children, but Duruy had gone a long way in that direction by the time he left office.

The Gamble of the Liberal Empire

The controversies aroused by Duruy's school reforms and Napoleon III's unwillingness to stand by his minister showed that the regime had lost much of its decisiveness by the late 1860s. One reason for the government's troubles was the embarrassing series of failures it suffered in foreign affairs. When the American Civil War cut off supplies of raw cotton from the southern states and plunged the textile industry into crisis, Napoleon III talked about diplomatic intervention to impose a settlement favorable to the Confederacy, but in the end he did nothing. In 1862, he sent French forces to intervene in Mexico, an area that had attracted some French business interests. Napoleon III hoped to establish a French-backed government under the Austrian Archduke Maximilian, but the effort ended in calamity in 1867 when Mexican republicans led by Benito Juarez defeated Maximilien's forces and executed him. In Europe, too, the situation was increasingly menacing for France. The dynamic Prussian leader, Otto von Bismarck, engineered a successful war against Austria in 1866 that led to the creation of a North German Confederation under Prussian domination in 1867. Faced with the threat of a powerful united Germany on its eastern frontier, the French government sought to demonstrate its ability to control matters by claiming territorial compensation for itself. But Bismarck blocked French efforts to annex Luxembourg in 1867.

Shaken by these reverses abroad, Napoleon III sought once again to regain support at home by further measures of liberalization. New reforms in 1867 gave the legislature the right to summon the ministers to defend their policies. Most restrictions on the press were abolished, as were laws that had hampered the holding of public meetings and the conduct of election campaigns. Rather than mollifying the regime's opponents, these changes unleashed a torrent of attacks on the government. Perhaps the most successful of the regime's new critics was journalist Henri de Rochefort, who took advantage of the end of press censorship to launch a weekly journal called *La Lanterne*. His virulent personal attacks on the emperor and on the regime's bureaucratic authoritarianism won him an immense circulation. The government's inability to counter him and the many other journalists and caricaturists who quickly followed his example showed how badly its base of support had eroded.

Parliamentary elections in 1869 confirmed the steady rise of the opposition. As the possibility of actually coming to power increased, however, the political spectrum began to shift. Fearful of the rise of more extreme groups, such as the socialists, some liberals and republicans muted their traditional hostility to cooperation with the regime. Napoleon III seized on this opening by making the most prominent of these moderates, Emile Ollivier, his prime minister and initiating yet another set of political reforms. These created the so-called Liberal Empire, a genuine parliamentary regime based on universal manhood suffrage. Ministers now had to have the confidence of the

legislature to hold their posts, although the emperor still retained the right to choose and dismiss them, as well as control foreign policy. In 20 years, Napoleon III's regime had evolved from a pseudo-democratic dictatorship to what looked like a genuine constitutional monarchy. A plebiscite in May 1870 seemed to indicate that these reforms and the granting of power to a distinguished opposition leader had allowed Napoleon III to regain broad public support. The voters endorsed the Liberal Empire by 7,350,000 to 1,538,000, a margin reminiscent of the early days when the prefects had "made" elections as they pleased. But this apparently massive support depended on the new government's ability to show it could reverse the trend of failures that had marked the decade of the 1860s. Bismarck was not to grant the Liberal Empire that opportunity.

The Franco-Prussian War

The 1866 war had left Prussia in control of all of northern Germany, but Bismarck still sought to bring the south German states that were traditionally suspicious of Prussian domination into a unified national state. He knew that nothing united Germans as much as anti-French sentiment, rooted in bitter memories of occupation in Napoleonic days. Bismarck, therefore, took advantage of a complicated imbroglio over Prussian efforts to put a member of the Hohenzollern family on the Spanish throne to create a diplomatic crisis with France. The latter had reacted strongly to the threat of having a Prussian ally on its southern border. Prussia actually agreed to withdraw its bid for influence in Spain, but Bismarck altered the wording of a telegram drafted by the Prussian king stating the agreement so that it seemed to incorporate a deliberate humiliation of the French. Ollivier and Napoleon III, uneasily aware of Prussia's military power and France's unpreparedness, nevertheless decided they could not risk accepting the insult represented by this "Ems telegram."

French public opinion was divided about the war, with nationalist sentiment strongest in the cities. On paper, France's military forces seemed equal to the challenge. The Prussians had superior artillery, but the French *chassepot* rifle, introduced in 1866, was better than enemy firearms. However, the French suffered from critical weaknesses in command. The leading French generals, used to colonial campaigns against poorly armed opponents, had no agreed-upon strategic plan for the war. The Prussian general staff, on the other hand, had been preparing for such a conflict since 1866. The French mobilization effort was chaotic, with plans being changed in the midst of the process and some units being sent to the front before all their men had reported for duty. More than a sixth of the soldiers never appeared at all. The two main French armies were assembled at Strasbourg and Metz, near the border, from where they were supposed to launch an invasion of German territory. The Prussians quickly gained the initiative, however. By August 16, after two weeks of fighting, they had cut off the retreat route of General Bazaine's army in the Lorraine fortress of Metz. Discredited by these unexpected defeats, Ollivier had to resign, and a new ministry headed by a conservative Bonapartist, General Palikao, was named. General MacMahon, commander of the remaining French field forces, was given conflicting instructions—first to protect the capital, then to move east to rescue Bazaine. Accompanied by the emperor, who had unwisely decided to associate himself directly with the army, MacMahon was cornered by the Prussians at Sedan, near the northern border, on September 2, 1870. The Prussians captured 104,000

prisoners, including Napoleon III himself. The emperor had ridden into the fray with the idea that, if he died in battle, he might at least generate enough sympathy to keep the country loyal to the regime.

The news of the defeat at Sedan reached Paris early in the morning of September 4. Crowds assembled in the streets demanding the overthrow of the Empire. At Paris's Hôtel de Ville (the traditional locus of popular power), deputies from the legislature's republican opposition, led by skilled orator Léon Gambetta, repeated the procedure of 1848. They proclaimed the Republic, opening a new cycle of revolution. As in 1830 and 1848, the old government collapsed without a struggle. The overwhelming mandate it had received in the plebiscite of May 1870 proved to be meaningless in the face of military debacle. But war had only revealed the regime's deeper weakness. In its effort to satisfy all sectors of French society, the Bonapartist regime had never acquired a solid base of support. Too authoritarian and too favorable to the upper classes to win over the common people, it was nevertheless too reform-minded and too sympathetic to the concerns of workers and peasants to woo the notables away from their Legitimist or Orléanist sympathies.

Under its successor, the Third Republic, the reputation of the Second Empire was consistently negative. Above all, Napoleon III was blamed for the humiliating military defeat that resulted in the loss of French territory—the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine that Bismarck annexed to the new German Empire. In the twentieth century, the Second Empire's authoritarian political structure combined with its use of pseudo-democratic plebiscitary elections led some historians to see Napoleon III as a forerunner of twentieth-century totalitarian dictators like Mussolini and Hitler. Only after the Second World War did scholars come to take a more favorable view of a government that had made real efforts to promote economic development and to cope with the problems of urban communities. The Fifth Republic created by Charles de Gaulle in 1958, a government with a powerful president elected by universal suffrage, appeared in some ways to be a reversion to the traditions of the Liberal Empire. Even the artistic taste of the Second Empire, long condemned as shallow and showy, came to be seen with greater sympathy in the late 1960s and 1970s. Charles Garnier's elaborate, eclectically decorated opera house (begun under Napoleon III but only completed in 1875), so offensive to modernist architects for whom ornament was crime, appealed to postmodern sensibilities. In the years after 1980, however, the regime's image was again called into question. Social historians made "Haussmannization" synonymous with the expulsion of the poorer classes from city centers, and a rehabilitation of the nineteenth-century republican movement led to a harsher verdict on the regime against which it revolted in 1870. More recently, however, some scholars have argued that the regime's initiatives helped foster the institutions that allowed for the success of republicanism after 1870. These changing images of the Second Empire reflect the ambiguous characteristics of both the regime itself—so much harder to classify than other governments of the nineteenth century—and of its enigmatic leader.

16 The Paris Commune and the Origins of the Third Republic

When republican militants proclaimed the start of a new republic, first in the leftwing strongholds of Lyon and Marseille on September 2, 1870, and then in Paris two days later, no one could have guessed that their actions were laying the basis for what is still the most long-lived regime France has known since the fall of the Bourbon monarchy in 1789. The hastily established Government of National Defense was barely able to maintain control of a capital boiling with agitation. In the country at large, conservative forces saw their long-awaited opportunity to reassert themselves. French settlers in Algeria seized the chance to overthrow the military regime they had complained about throughout the Second Empire and demand new rights. Most dangerously, the Prussians' victory at Sedan left the rest of France open to invasion. The next twelve months were seared into French memory as *l'année terrible*, the "terrible year," which cost France 260,000 lives and subjected the country to a painful military defeat, the loss of an important part of its territory, a revolutionary uprising and a civil war that left much of Paris in ruins. The catastrophes of 1870–1871 would not be overshadowed until the world wars of the twentieth century.

The Government of National Defense

The provisional government set up in Paris in September 1870 had to choose between two fundamentally different responses to the Prussian invasion. One was advocated by the young republican Léon Gambetta, the new government's minister of the interior, the other by the 73-year-old Adolphe Thiers, architect of the Orléanist takeover in 1830 and leader of the conservative "Party of Order" during the Second Republic of 1848. Gambetta was determined to emulate the Jacobin republicans of 1792 and rally the country against the foreign invader. Thiers saw military defeat as inevitable. He hoped merely to keep its cost in territory and indemnities as small as possible. The majority of deputies in the Chamber would have preferred to entrust the government to Thiers, but he refused to take responsibility for a defeat brought about by the Napoleonic regime he had so long opposed. In any event, the mass of the Parisian population insisted on a militantly republican regime. Gambetta and the other leftwing deputies who formed the government thought that establishing themselves in power was the only way to ward off a takeover by even more radical elements. Thiers was dispatched on a fruitless tour of foreign capitals to seek diplomatic support against Prussia's demands.

France's military situation was already too compromised to give efforts to reverse the outcome of the war much chance to succeed. Sedan had destroyed the main body

of the French army. The largest remaining element of it, Bazaine's force, was surrounded in the fortress of Metz, where it eventually surrendered at the end of October. On September 20, Prussian forces encircled Paris, cutting it off from the rest of the country. While army troops and the Parisian militia, the National Guard, prepared to withstand a siege, Gambetta made a spectacular escape from the capital in a hot-air balloon. From Tours, southwest of Paris, he issued a ringing proclamation calling for a popular uprising against the occupiers: "Tied down and contained by the capital, the Prussians, far from home, anxious, harassed, hunted down by our reawakened people, will be gradually decimated by our arms, by hunger, by natural causes."¹ Gambetta did succeed in assembling a new army south of the Loire River, but the national uprising he had called for failed to materialize. Most of the French population, whose patriotism had saved the First Republic 80 years earlier, refused to join what appeared a hopeless struggle.

Only in Paris and a few big provincial cities was there strong popular support for continued resistance. During the Empire, the capital had become a stronghold of radical republican and socialist agitation. These leftwing groups now proclaimed themselves the true representatives of French patriotism and opposed any suggestion of capitulation. Blaming the Empire's repressive bureaucratic regime for France's catastrophic defeat, they called for the decentralization of power and the creation of a democratically elected "Commune" to govern Paris. Meanwhile, the Prussian army prepared to starve the city into submission. The French military commanders and members of the Provisional Government who had remained in Paris considered the situation hopeless, but they feared a popular uprising if they surrendered. As the siege dragged on, food and fuel began to run short. Newspapers published recipes for cooking dogs, cats, and rats, while the wealthy dined on the animals from the Paris zoo. In January, the Prussians began regular bombardment of the city. After a desperate attack on the Prussian lines failed to break the siege, the provisional government finally agreed to Bismarck's terms for an armistice in order to hold national elections for a government that would negotiate peace terms.

The elections, organized in a little over a week and held on February 8, 1871, pitted a republican movement identified with a policy of continued fighting against a broad and amorphous coalition of conservative forces that frequently identified themselves only as "the party of peace." The rural voters who dominated the population made an unambiguous choice: they voted for peace, for Thiers's policy rather than Gambetta's. Thiers himself received a strong personal mandate, being elected in 26 districts. Overall, the assembly initially contained over 400 deputies who favored a monarchist restoration, as opposed to about 200 republicans.

But the appearance of a conservative triumph was misleading. Many peasants who voted for an end to the war in February 1871 showed themselves firmly opposed to any effort to bring back features of the Old Regime in subsequent elections. Furthermore, the conservatives were not a solid bloc. Monarchists were divided between diehard Legitimists, loyal to the comte de Chambord (heir of the Bourbon king Charles X, who had been overthrown in the Revolution of 1830); Orléanists, who wanted to bring back the dynasty installed in that Revolution and the conservative, business-oriented regime it represented; and Bonapartists, loyal to the Empire that had just collapsed. Conservative Catholics, who blamed the Second Empire for encouraging an atmosphere of "sensuous self-indulgence," as one bishop put it, saw the defeat of 1870 as a divine warning to France to change its ways, but their strident calls for national repentance alienated much of the population. Thiers, who now became head of the government,

understood the conservatives' weaknesses. As long ago as 1850, he had despaired of bringing the different dynasties' supporters together and had recommended a republican constitution because it was "the government that divides us the least." In order to assure himself broad support while he negotiated an end to the war, however, he postponed any debate about constitutional questions.

The Uprising of the Commune

Cautious and skillful in his management of the monarchist-dominated National Assembly, Thiers was insensitive in his treatment of radical-dominated Paris. The siege and final surrender left the city's population feeling betrayed by the rest of the country. The conservative Assembly's refusal to move any closer to the capital than Versailles irritated Parisians even further. The Assembly also angered them by terminating emergency measures taken during the siege to aid the poorer classes. By early March, it had ended a rent moratorium, cut off the pay of the National Guardsmen who had defended the city, and created a crisis for small businessmen by ordering the immediate payment of overdue bills. These actions were all the more dangerous because the units of the National Guard, organized on a neighborhood basis, still had their rifles and the cannon with which they had stood off the Prussians for four months.

Especially in the National Guard units recruited in the city's poorer neighborhoods, members of radical and socialist groups had found a strong base of support. The changes that had taken place in the city under the Second Empire favored the growth of such movements. Haussmann's rebuilding schemes had pushed workers out of the city's center and concentrated them in new neighborhoods where they lived isolated from the bourgeoisie. The growth of the economy had swelled the city's working population, and the gradual spread of schooling had made workers more literate. Finally, the labor movement that had grown up in the 1860s, and the flowering of political debate that followed the liberalization measures of 1867, had favored the circulation of radical ideas.

By 1871, many different revolutionary groups were competing for the support of the Paris population. The radical republicans, some of them veterans of 1848, blamed the Versailles Assembly for accepting Prussia's victory and feared that it would vote for a monarchist restoration. But the republicans also had to compete with a variety of socialist and communist movements. There were mutualist followers of Proudhon, who favored the organization of workers' cooperatives and participatory local governments; and there were supporters of the veteran political conspirator Louis Auguste Blanqui, who wanted a determined revolutionary elite to seize power in order to create a government favoring the common people. Then there were supporters of the International Working Men's Association, the "International," who had begun to absorb the ideas of Karl Marx and advocate a social revolution against capitalist property to accompany any political upheaval. All of these groups had organized clubs in the capital after the fall of the Empire, and they all had supporters in the National Guard, whose units had become hotbeds of political agitation. An elected Central Committee of the National Guard gave the radicals a base from which to challenge the government.

On March 18, 1871, Thiers sent troops to try to seize the cannon that Paris's National Guard units had refused to give up after the end of the siege. In response to the government's action, crowds took over several government buildings in the capital, and killed two conservative army officers. Thus began the uprising of the Paris

Commune, one of the most controversial episodes in modern French history. The initial popular movement had not been planned, and decisive action might have allowed Thiers's government to keep control of the capital. But Thiers, a veteran of the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, had long cherished a particular notion of how to react to such an uprising. He deliberately withdrew government forces from the city, allowing the radicals to take it over completely while he prepared a methodical military assault to crush the movement. The vacuum he left behind invited the radicals to set up a government of their own.

For the first few days, the Commune movement seemed to have the initiative. The Parisians' call for the restoration of local autonomy and their appeal to patriotic sentiments set off sympathetic movements in several other cities, including Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, and the factory towns of Saint-Etienne and Le Creusot. But these lacked the broad base of support that the Paris movement had and were all swiftly put down. In Paris itself, however, the experience of the siege had allowed radical ideas to penetrate both the working class and the petty bourgeoisie of small shopkeepers, businessmen, and employees. In elections for a Commune, or citywide parliament, on

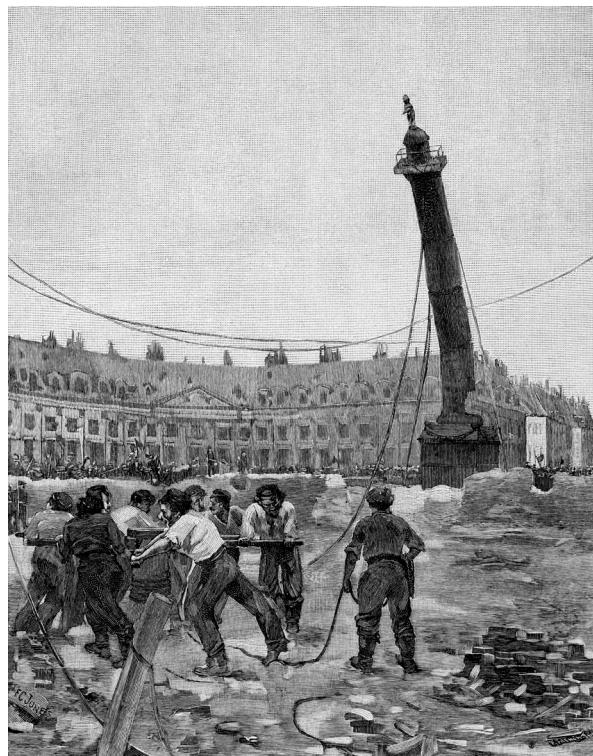


Figure 16.1 The Paris Commune Uprising

In March 1871, supporters of the Paris Commune uprising toppled the column in the place Vendôme that honored Napoleon I. Their action underlined their determination to break with the past and create a new kind of society in France. The column was rebuilt after the defeat of the Commune and still stands today. (Classic Image/Alamy Stock Photo)

March 26, voters chose delegates who represented various radical and socialist currents in the city. Abstentions ran high in the city's wealthy bourgeois neighborhoods, but the movement clearly enjoyed substantial support. Inside the capital and in many provincial cities, republican groups who opposed the Commune's socialist elements and its defiance of the national government nevertheless recognized the patriotic impulse behind it. They tried to get Thiers to negotiate a peaceful settlement. But Thiers and the conservative majority of the Versailles Assembly were determined to demonstrate that, despite its defeat by the Prussians, the national government was strong enough to put down any domestic revolt.

During the two months it took Thiers to assemble his forces, the *Communards* offered the world the spectacle of a government attempting to legislate in the name of the working classes and common people. This, together with the brutality that accompanied the movement's eventual defeat, made the Commune's memory a rallying point for socialist and leftist movements in France and elsewhere. Karl Marx would subsequently proclaim that the Commune had been "a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class."² The reality of the Commune was less clear-cut. Of the 81 deputies to the Commune council, at most 35 were genuine workers, primarily skilled artisans rather than factory workers; 30 were educated professionals of various sorts (including 15 journalists); and most of the remainder could be classified as small businessmen. The social reforms they enacted were cautious for the most part and—like decrees allowing workers to take over shops whose owners had abandoned them—were often responses dictated by an emergency situation rather than attempts to restructure society in accordance with radical doctrines. The *Communards* were inspired as much by France's republican and revolutionary traditions as they were by socialist ideologies. The disagreements among them were one of the main reasons why the movement failed.

Nevertheless, the Commune did take steps that offered at least the suggestion of a society organized on very different principles from those of the nineteenth-century French bourgeois order. It was the first French government in which workers actually held some important positions. If its actions were limited, its rhetoric was expansive. The Labor and Exchange Commission set up to deal with social problems announced its intention of achieving "the emancipation of labor, the abolition of monopolies and privileges, the end of industrial feudalism."³ The Commune promised free public education, organized along scientific lines, and paid special attention to the problem of women's schooling, setting up an all-female Commission for Girls' Education and promising a network of day-care centers to help working mothers.

Women's participation was one of the Commune's most striking features. Women such as Louise Michel, a schoolteacher who had been active in radical circles during the 1860s, took part in political clubs and even formed groups of their own. Michel had been one of the leaders of the armed resistance to the seizure of the National Guard's cannon on March 18, 1871. Elizabeth Dimitrieff, a radical Russian exile, tried to set up women's workshops to make uniforms for the National Guards, arguing that if the Commune failed to provide gainful employment for women, they would have no choice but to support conservatism. Indeed, the Commune did encounter resistance from some women over measures such as the closing of Catholic schools.

All of the Commune's social experiments were doomed to failure, however, by its inability to organize an effective defense of the city against the Versailles

government's forces. The army brought fresh soldiers from the provinces and indoctrinated them to believe that Paris was in the hands of criminal anarchists. The Commune, hamstrung by the reluctance of its National Guards to obey any central authority, did little to prepare for an assault. On May 21, 1871, the Versailles forces attacked the poorly defended fortifications on the west side of the city, rapidly occupying well-to-do bourgeois neighborhoods where support for the Commune was weakest. For the seven days of "the bloody week," from May 21 to 28, 1871, the *Communards* fought a losing battle on the barricades, making their last stand at the Père Lachaise cemetery. Its south wall, where the last armed defenders were shot, became the French left's most sacred monument. The Versailles troops treated their foes with terrible ferocity, shooting thousands of prisoners out of hand. The *Communards* retaliated by killing several prominent hostages, including the archbishop of Paris. During the fighting, fire destroyed a number of important buildings, including the Tuileries Palace and the Hôtel-de-Ville. Conservatives spread the myth that female incendiaries, the *petroleuses*, had deliberately tried to burn down all of Paris. Traditionally, historians have cited figures of 20,000 to 25,000 deaths in the fighting, the overwhelming majority of them *Communards* or innocent victims. Recent research has indicated that these figures are probably inflated, and that the number may have been as low as 7,000. Even so, however, it was the largest toll in any civil conflict in Europe during the nineteenth century. The Versailles forces arrested some 40,000 prisoners, who were held under extremely harsh conditions for months afterward. Thiers's policy had prevailed, but at the cost of making France's political and social divisions more bitter than ever.

While the Commune uprising was under way, Thiers's government also had to deal with a major insurrection against French rule in Algeria. A series of natural disasters in the country in the late 1860s had driven the Muslim population to desperation. Their leaders recognized that the situation in France and divisions between the colonists and the French government offered them an opportunity. After the defeat of Sedan, the European colonists had effectively overthrown the military government. Their movement, headed by a French republican named Vuillermoz who had been exiled to Algeria in 1848 for his radicalism, insisted on fulfillment of promises made as long ago as 1848 that the colony would be "assimilated" to France, although they also wanted full citizenship rights limited to Europeans. Gambetta's provisional government had promised the end of military rule, but stopped short of granting all the settlers' demands. The settlers resented its decision to grant French citizenship to Algeria's Jewish minority through the Crémieux law of October 1870, a measure designed to assure that group's loyalty to France; the Algerian colonists' anti-Semitism would help sustain anti-Jewish attitudes in France itself well into the twentieth century. Meanwhile, popular unrest spread among the Muslim population. A traditional Algerian chief, Mohammed el Mokrani, put himself at the head of the movement, and on April 8, 1871, proclaimed a *jihad* or holy war against the French. Up to a third of the colony's Muslim population joined the uprising, but their attacks on French settlements were poorly coordinated, and the death of Mokrani in early May deprived them of effective leadership. The Mokrani rebellion drove the European settlers and the French government back together. Heavy fines were imposed on districts that had rebelled, impoverishing the population, and large amounts of Muslim land were turned over to Europeans. The colonists achieved their dream of seeing French laws extended to the colony in ways that benefited them.

The Conservative Republic

The Commune uprising might have been expected to favor the monarchist movement, just as the June Days uprising of 1848 had played into the hands of conservatives. Paradoxically, it cleared the way for the success of republicanism in France. By liquidating the *Communards*, Thiers demonstrated that a republican government could defend social order. The leaders of the various socialist and revolutionary groups that had participated in the uprising were either dead, imprisoned, or in exile, so that for some years the republicans faced no organized opposition on their left. Gambetta, who had resigned from the National Assembly in opposition to the treaty with Prussia, avoided compromising himself with the Commune movement and remained free to continue his political activities. At the end of April 1871, even before the end of the Commune, republicans scored well in local elections, indicating the degree to which their movement had implanted itself in the country at large. In the Assembly itself, the various royalist groups still had a majority, but they proved unable to capitalize on it.

For the first two years after the Commune uprising, Thiers solidly controlled the Assembly, even though he had had to accept the harsh peace terms dictated by Bismarck and incorporated in the Treaty of Frankfurt. France lost the German-speaking province of Alsace and half of the heavily industrialized region of Lorraine. German troops were to remain in France pending the payment of an indemnity of 5 billion francs. Bismarck had exploited German national enthusiasm for the war to proclaim the creation of a new German Empire. France, reduced in size and economic strength, now for the first time in centuries faced a larger and more powerful continental rival. Nevertheless, public confidence in Thiers's leadership remained strong. A sale of government bonds to pay off the first installment of the war indemnity, held just a month after the defeat of the Commune, was a success. Elections to fill some 100 vacant seats in the National Assembly in July 1871 were also significant; republican candidates won a clear victory.

Reluctant to confront Thiers until the German troops were withdrawn in 1873, the monarchist majority of the Assembly sought to create conditions for an eventual restoration. At first glance, the problem seemed simple. The Bourbon pretender, the comte de Chambord, was aged and childless; at his death, the crown would pass automatically to the Orléanist candidate, the comte de Paris. But Chambord proved determined to claim the throne on his own terms or not at all. After a brief visit to France in early 1871, he announced that he would only return if the country agreed to restore many of the features of the absolute monarchy and, above all, to abandon the tricolor flag for the traditional white flag of the Bourbons. Only a small minority of die-hard Legitimists were willing to support this symbolic rejection of everything that had happened in France since 1789. Chambord's intransigent position ruled out any compromise with the Orléanists and allowed Thiers to paint the monarchists, rather than the republicans, as the main threat to political stability. "The Republic exists, it is the legal government of the country: to want anything else would be a new revolution," he warned in 1872.⁴

In May 1873, with the war indemnity paid off and the German troops removed, the Assembly's conservative majority finally toppled Thiers. The Legitimist supporters of the comte de Chambord now had their opportunity to implement a restoration, but the Orléanists refused to accept a king who rejected constitutional government and the tricolor flag. By October 1873, it was clear that an immediate restoration was out of the question. As a stopgap measure, the Assembly installed for seven years the conservative Marshal MacMahon as president with extensive powers, including the

right to dissolve the Assembly and call new elections. This was intended as an interim arrangement; many deputies hoped that the death of the aged Chambord would soon clear the way for the completion of an acceptable monarchist constitution. Chambord made a final effort to outwit them by traveling secretly to Versailles to persuade MacMahon to stage a royalist coup. But the general, despite his conservative views, refused to risk such an adventure, and the would-be "Henry V" returned to exile for the last time.

MacMahon and the supporters of the conservative "government of Moral Order" tried to use their power to halt the growth of the republican movement, but the pretender's intransigence fatally weakened their efforts. Many Legitimists blamed the Orléanists for sabotaging the chances of a restoration. In their fury, they were even prepared on occasion to vote with the republicans. As the two monarchist factions damaged each other, the Bonapartists staged a menacing recovery: by 1875, voters dissatisfied with the Assembly's squabbles had made them the largest conservative group in the Assembly.

Republicans Strengthen Their Base

Meanwhile, despite governmental efforts to harass them, the republicans continued to strengthen their political base. The "Moral Order" regime made censorship more oppressive than it had been under the liberal Empire. Local republican officials were removed from office, and the police kept up the chase after republican symbols such as the female effigy "Marianne," who had come to stand for the republican movement. The "Moral Order" government maintained a close alliance with the Catholic Church, which condemned the republican movement as atheistic and revolutionary. Government support helped the church build the huge basilica of Sacre-Coeur on the top of the Montmartre hill in Paris as a symbol of the nation's repentance for the moral sins that Catholics blamed for the defeat of 1870. To republicans, the new church represented a standing insult. When they finally came to power, they erected a statue of the Chevalier de la Barre, who had been burned at the stake in the 1760s for blasphemy, in front of Sacre-Coeur, as a rebuke to religious intolerance.

Despite strenuous efforts, the "Moral Order" government proved unable to stem the rise of republican sentiment. The new values of democracy, secularism, and rationalist individualism that characterized the post-1848 republicans had sunk strong roots in the population by 1870. During the 1860s, the liberalization of the Empire had permitted the rise of a new generation of republican leaders, more realistic and pragmatic than those who had made the unsuccessful Revolution of 1848. Léon Gambetta was the most prominent, but he was only one of a group of talented and articulate militants who would provide the country much of its leadership well into the 1880s.

The republicans had found in school reform a central issue around which they could organize. The Alsatian schoolteacher-activist Jean Macé's *Ligue de l'Enseignement* (Education League), founded in 1866, served under both the Empire and the "Moral Order" government as an organizational framework for the movement as a whole. The demand for universal elementary education expressed the republicans' democratic convictions. Their insistence that this education be secular and based on science, rather than religion, expressed their devotion to progress and modernity and their opposition to the social and political influence of the Catholic church. Common schools, the republicans believed, would reduce the antagonisms between classes and

thus prevent the growth of socialism. The Commune uprising made them all the more determined to establish a government that would head off the danger of a proletarian revolution.

The republicans were equally determined to change the place of women in French society. Jules Simon, one of the most prominent republican leaders, had written a book denouncing the mistreatment of women workers under the Empire. Most republicans shared the conviction that women, as long as they were educated by Catholic teachers, would be a hostile force opposing progress in the country. While the republicans stopped far short of advocating civil equality for women—they were primarily concerned to make them better helpmates to their republican spouses—they nevertheless favored female education and some revision of the Code Civil's heavily male-biased provisions on divorce and property rights.

Despite the failure of his war policy in 1870, Gambetta regained his position as leader of the republicans in the Assembly by 1872. His strategy was to take advantage of the monarchists' paralysis to win gradual acceptance for a republican constitution. Aware that they had to agree to new constitutional arrangements, the monarchists grudgingly came to acknowledge that there was no alternative to formal acceptance of republicanism. Gambetta, for his part, persuaded his followers to accept the establishment of an upper house or Senate to be chosen by the elected officials of France's municipalities, rather than directly by the voters. This arrangement violated the principle of direct popular sovereignty dear to the republicans. Conservatives had pressed for it because they expected to find support from the numerous village mayors who would dominate the voting. But Gambetta anticipated correctly that the republican movement could win over these rural voters.

On January 30, 1875, the Assembly took the crucial step. It passed, by a margin of one vote, a motion introduced by deputy Wallon providing that "the President of the Republic is elected by the plurality of votes cast by the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies." By its oblique reference to the form of the regime, the Wallon amendment established the fact that the new constitution would be republican. In contrast to France's two previous republican constitutions, that of what came to be known as the Third Republic was promulgated almost without fanfare. It included no preamble stating general principles and no declaration of rights. There was no reason to assume that the new constitution would prove to be France's most enduring since 1789, lasting until the defeat of 1940.

In Europe of 1875, however, the Third Republic's adoption of universal suffrage and its rejection of monarchy remained exceptional. Britain would not follow France's lead in instituting universal manhood suffrage until 1918. The universal suffrage Bismarck had introduced in the new German Empire disguised the fact that real power remained in the hands of the emperor, the ministers, and the army. Only in two major countries, France and the United States, were democratic and republican institutions given a chance to prove themselves in the last third of the nineteenth century.

It remained for the republicans in France to capture the republic that the monarchist-dominated National Assembly had made. In 1876, the Assembly's five-year term ran out and the new Senate was to be chosen. Despite the "Moral Order" government's best efforts, the republicans—helped by the Legitimist minority, which struck a deal with Gambetta to exclude the Orléanists from the 75 Senate seats filled by the Assembly—won clear majorities in both houses. The conservatives' last hope was that the powers of the president would be sufficient to resist the legislature. MacMahon

named a moderate republican, Jules Simon, as prime minister, hoping that he and some of the republican deputies could be persuaded to abandon the core of their program. But Simon refused to do so. On May 16, 1877, MacMahon embarked on a test of whether he could overturn a hostile legislature. In a move widely condemned as a coup, he dismissed Simon and dissolved the Chamber of Deputies, appealing to the country to back him up. MacMahon summoned the prefects to make an all-out effort to influence the voters, but the verdict of the elections was clear-cut. The 323 avowedly republican deputies, led by Gambetta, strongly outnumbered the 208 supporters of the president.

MacMahon, a devoted monarchist but too cautious to defy such a clear expression of the popular will, gave up the struggle. Although he did not resign until January 1879, he made no further effort to exercise his constitutional powers. The outcome of the May 16, 1877, coup clearly established the republicans' ascendancy.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War* (London: Methuen, 1981), 240.
- 2 Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (Chicago, IL: Charles H. Kerr, 1934), 88.
- 3 Cited in Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), 276.
- 4 Cited in John Patrick Tuer Bury and Robert Tombs, *Thiers, 1797–1877: A Political Life* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 223.

17 The Republicans in Power

Only when the moderate republican Jules Grévy replaced MacMahon as president in January 1879 did the outcome of the events of 1870 finally become clear. France was to be neither a socialist revolutionary republic, as the *Communards* had hoped, nor a conservative regime with Catholic overtones. It would be a secular political democracy. Universal manhood suffrage, inaugurated by the short-lived Second Republic in 1848 and maintained—despite distortions caused by an authoritarian government—throughout the Second Empire, had come to be regarded as an indispensable condition for political legitimacy. But the republican regime would be socially conservative. Women were denied the vote throughout its history. The bicameral legislature, with its rurally dominated Senate, was a safeguard against radical legislation. The electorate, dominated numerically by landowning peasants and members of the urban middle classes, was hardly likely to favor candidates hostile to the rights of property.

French Parliamentary Democracy

By the middle of the 1880s, the distinctive features of this moderate French-style democracy were becoming clear. The new system's key institution was the Chamber of Deputies, the large and fractious assembly that represented the principle of popular sovereignty. Although the indirectly elected Senate supposedly had equal legislative powers, almost all laws were initiated in the Chamber. With the president of the Republic reduced to a largely symbolic role after MacMahon's failed coup of 1877, executive power fell to the Council of Ministers and particularly to its president or premier—the deputy designated by the president of the Republic to put together a team of ministers or cabinet.

The French system resembled the British one in that the cabinet had to resign if it could not command a parliamentary majority. But the two parliamentary systems actually functioned very differently because the French did not have a two-party system like the British. Deputies were elected from single-member constituencies, a system that favored candidates with strong local bases of support and made them largely independent of national parties. In contrast to Britain—where by 1870 the leader of the largest party in the House of Commons automatically became prime minister, and normally remained in office until his party lost an election—in France, several different politicians might be able to assemble a majority in the Chamber. In the absence of a strong party system, election results did not necessarily dictate the nature of the different parliamentary coalitions that could be put together to form a government. A cabinet could be overthrown at any time by a negative vote in the Chamber. No ministry ever lasted for the entire four-year span of a Third Republic legislature.

Over the decades, the seeming incoherence of French politics, with its rapid changes of ministries and sometimes prolonged periods of parliamentary crisis, gave the country a reputation for instability and ineffectiveness in the face of major problems. Throughout its existence, the Third Republic was the subject of regular criticism, but no major constitutional revisions were carried out before the regime's final collapse in 1940. One reason for this stability was that the Third Republic's political life was not as chaotic as it appeared on the surface. The frequent changes of ministries masked a high degree of continuity in leadership. The same politicians usually reappeared in one cabinet after another. These *ministrables* made up a relatively small group and ensured a continuity of policies. The stability of the top officials who served under the ministers in the major government departments (often for terms of ten years or more) also compensated for the rapid changes at the cabinet level. The centralized administrative system created under Napoleon, staffed by career officials with a strong sense of loyalty to the state, provided a balance to the constantly changing world of the Chamber.

The French parliamentary system had the virtue of flexibility. Ministers who could not find support for their policies were quickly eliminated, and periods of rapid turnover in ministries alternated with stretches during which one premier held office long enough to put through substantial programs. Historians in recent years have pointed out that the Third Republic's legislatures did pass important reforms in a number of areas, and that the regime's institutional weaknesses only became crippling in the face of unforeseen challenges that followed the First World War. No one can deny, however, that the system made the passage of controversial legislation difficult. The Assembly could always evade hard choices by overthrowing the current ministry. The entrenched conservatism of the Senate made it a graveyard for reformist ideas, especially if they involved taxes or limits on the rights of property owners. In the words of twentieth-century American political scientist Stanley Hoffmann, "The regime had plenty of brakes and not much of a motor."¹ But this situation suited a majority of the electorate, made up for the most part of voters who feared they had more to lose from change than they did from maintaining the status quo.

The Ferry Era

Once they had gained control of both houses of parliament and the presidency in 1879, the "Opportunist" republicans (as those who had followed Gambetta in arguing for acceptance of the 1875 constitutional compromise and pursuit of reforms that were "opportune" under the circumstances called themselves) were able to demonstrate that, under certain circumstances, the new system allowed rapid passage of fundamental legislation. Surprisingly, however, the triumphant movement denied its most prominent spokesman the chance to head the government. Léon Gambetta, whose parliamentary leadership had been instrumental in outwitting the conservatives throughout the 1870s, had made too many enemies among his colleagues. They banded together to keep him out of office until 1881, when he was already dangerously ill. Gambetta held office for only 67 days and died a few months after the collapse of his ministry.

The other Opportunist leaders lacked Gambetta's dynamism and ability to appeal to the common man. But they did push through programs designed to give the Republic strong roots in the country. The most prominent was Jules Ferry, a long-time rival of Gambetta's. Like the other leaders of the early Third Republic, Ferry had come of age as a member of the republican opposition during the Second

Empire. Imbued with positivist ideas, he had also been a leading critic of that regime's heavy-handed administration. Twice president of the Council in the early 1880s, he also held the key office of minister of education for most of the period from 1879 to 1885.

The most important legacy of Ferry's ministries was the series of "Ferry laws" that created a public school system intended to instill loyalty to the nation and its new political institutions. The Ferry laws made elementary education free and compulsory for all children. Religious education in the public schools, introduced by the Falloux law in 1850, was abolished. The clergy were barred from teaching in the public schools, and the privileges granted to Catholic educational institutions—the establishment of a Catholic university in 1875 had been permitted—were curtailed. The republicans made a particularly dramatic challenge to the church's traditional domination of women's education. Camille Sée's law of 1880 set up public secondary schools for women for the first time, and an 1881 law established a training college at Sèvres to provide teachers for them.

The Ferry laws were more than a mere change in the organization of schooling. The principle behind the school laws, known as "laïcité," became the creed of the new regime, and one of its most important legacies to present-day France. Laïcité implied that public institutions should be entirely secular, giving no recognition to any religious creed or to any source of values other than the nation, as represented by its republican government. Individuals were free to hold whatever beliefs they wanted, but, under the principles of laïcité, religion became a purely private matter. Schoolteachers, male and female, were expected to adhere to these values and to combat the influence of the only other institution that was present in every community, the Catholic Church. "You don't have to shout 'I am a republican' from the rooftops," teachers in one rural district were told in 1887, "but if anyone attacks republicanism in front of you, you must have the courage to defend it."² The "black hussars of the Republic," as the frock-coated teachers were dubbed by their conservative critics, were expected to lead model personal lives that would inspire respect for the regime they served, and to take an active civic role. In many small communities, they occupied key political positions as secretaries to the mayor. Their education made them local notables with considerable influence on public opinion.

The educational materials used in the schools were designed to inculcate devotion to republican institutions and the French nation. Madame Augustine Fouillée's geography text *Two Children's Tour of France*, one of the most popular elementary school textbooks introduced in this period, propagated the message that all French citizens were part of one big family. It glorified the country's great soldiers and thinkers, downplayed the role of religion, and denigrated regional dialects and other potential threats to national unity. The "leçon de choses," an exercise in which the child was encouraged to draw conclusions from their observation and manipulation of physical objects and to learn "to use his senses, his intelligence, his ability to reason, to that he becomes able to increase his knowledge by himself," as the education official Ferdinand Buisson put it, became the center of an educational method meant to encourage independent critical thinking rather than the blind acceptance of authority that was held to be typical of religious education.³ But this emphasis on individual thought was balanced by a strong moral insistence on duties to the community. Boys were taught that they had an obligation to serve the country as soldiers; primary school textbooks for girls stressed their mission to grow up to serve others as wives and mothers.

Although the curriculum stressed the equality of all citizens, Ferry's educational program was not meant to have revolutionary implications. Textbooks stressed the inevitability of social inequality and pounded home the message that those who accepted their lot in life were usually happier than those who tried to rise above their station. Boys and girls went to separate schools. Girls, who did not receive serious lessons in science or subjects that would prepare them for higher education, were supposed to absorb messages that would give them "love of order, make them acquire the serious qualities of a housewife, and put them on guard against frivolous and dangerous tastes," according to instructions issued in 1887.⁴

In the eyes of its authors, the Third Republic's educational program was the regime's greatest accomplishment. Modern historians have shown that its proponents sometimes claimed credit for achievements that were well under way before 1880. Literacy rates, for example, had already increased steadily throughout the nineteenth century, and the compulsory schooling introduced after 1880 merely completed the process. Furthermore, the school reform program did not achieve all the goals its architects had had in mind. Despite governmental pressure against them, Catholic schools survived and as much as a third of the population continued to attend them. The reforms also had some unintended consequences. The universal literacy resulting from comprehensive schooling facilitated the spread of radical and socialist ideas. The introduction of schooling for women, and the possibility of a professional teaching career for educated women, led eventually to demands for a new status for women that had never been part of the legislators' intentions. Nevertheless, the school system created by the Ferry laws became a powerful engine for consolidation of the new republican regime.

Remodeling Institutions and Replacing Symbols

The Ferry school laws were not the only major legislative initiatives taken in the years of Opportunist ascendancy. In every aspect of French life, the victorious republicans moved to remodel institutions in accordance with their principles and to entrench the regime in everyday French life. A series of legal changes, such as a law of 1879 stripping prefects of the right to deny authorization for opening of bars and cafés—a power long used to deprive republicans of gathering places—curtailed authoritarian practices inherited from the Second Empire and earlier regimes. In 1881, laws restricting press freedom and imposing prior censorship on cartoons and on caricatures were abolished. In 1884, in the name of freedom of assembly, the organization of trade unions—tolerated since the 1860s—was finally legalized. A series of laws enacted between 1882 and 1884 gave cities and towns other than Paris (considered too much of a potential threat to the national government) the right to elect their own mayors and municipal councils. Divorce, prohibited since the Restoration, was made legal again in 1884, a reform seen as giving women greater individual freedom.

A law passed in 1884 consolidated the triumph of the new system by declaring the Republic to be France's definitive system of government. This proclamation was intended to give the regime a more solid foundation than the 1875 Wallon amendment, reluctantly adopted by a largely monarchist Assembly. The proclamation of 1884 was also a declaration that the regime would actively combat all those who challenged its basic values. Both groups that continued to believe in the monarchist and religious traditions of the past and those that questioned the individualist premises of liberalism and capitalism risked being stigmatized as enemies of the republican state.

To strengthen the regime, the republicans also created new symbols and rituals. July 14, the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, became an official national holiday in 1880. In the early years, its celebration was an occasion for militant denunciations of the church and the vestiges of the past. Busts of Marianne, the female personification of the Republic, which had been banned under the Empire and the “Moral Order” government, now multiplied in public squares and town halls. The largest of these statues, the French sculptor Auguste Bartholdi’s figure of Liberty lighting the world with her torch, towered over Paris in the early 1880s before it was shipped to its ultimate destination in New York. The completion of the Statue of Liberty, a gift to the United States first proposed by French republican enthusiasts after the North’s victory in the American Civil War in 1865 but opposed by the governments of the Second Empire and the “Moral Order,” was meant to underline France’s adherence to the principles of freedom exemplified by the American Constitution. The costs of the statue were covered by a popular subscription whose success testified to the spread of republicanism.

Even as they celebrated the legacy of the revolution of 1789, however, the republicans tried to create a broader sense of national memory that incorporated earlier periods of France’s past. In a celebrated speech in 1882, the positivist intellectual Ernest Renan defined national identity as the product of “a common heritage of memories.” With the French defeat of 1870 in mind, he added that “common sufferings create unity more than triumphs.” At the same time, however, he insisted that national feeling depended on active consent: “The existence of a nation … is a daily plebiscite.”⁵ Renan’s emphasis on consent contrasted sharply with the German argument that their annexation of Alsace and Lorraine was justified because their populations were originally of German origin, even if they identified themselves as French. The historical works of Ernest Lavisse, the regime’s official historian, embodied Renan’s program, depicting France’s kings as having begun the work of making the nation that was completed by the revolutionaries and their republican successors. To promote political reconciliation, the Opportunist government pardoned the surviving participants of the Commune uprising. In 1882, the public celebration of civic funerals without religious elements became legal; the secular state funerals for the republican leader Gambetta in 1882 and the poet Victor Hugo in 1885 provided emphatic demonstrations of the triumph of the new values.

Along with legal reform and the propagation of new symbols, the Opportunist republicans sought to prove that their regime would guarantee economic prosperity. The Freycinet plan of 1878, a massive expansion of the national rail network to small towns all over the country, was the keystone of this effort. It provided construction contracts and employment opportunities, and brought tangible evidence of the government’s activities to many communities. The economic rationale for many of the new rail lines was dubious, but the political impact of these “electoral lines” was significant.

Although the Third Republic consolidated democratic institutions in metropolitan France, its impact on France’s most important overseas possession, Algeria, was quite different. After the defeat of the Mokrani rebellion in 1871, the French colonists, most of them vehemently republican, had obtained their demand to be treated as full French citizens. Algeria was no longer considered a colony. Its European population, together with its Jewish minority, granted rights in 1870, elected deputies to the French Assembly and had French courts, which applied laws that were very much at odds with Algerian traditions on such crucial issues as land ownership. Educated Muslims

had the theoretical right to claim French citizenship, provided they explicitly renounced their rights under the Muslim law that continued to govern everyday life for their community, but few of them were willing to commit what they regarded as an act of apostasy. As a result, Algeria was run almost entirely in the interests of its small European population—which, in addition to settlers from France, included immigrants from Spain, Italy, and Malta—while the much larger Muslim population was excluded from participation in public life. While the Third Republic’s policies exacerbated political inequality in Algeria, they had a different impact in the Caribbean colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe, where men of all races were now granted the vote. The islands’ conservative white elites largely boycotted elections, leaving public offices in the hands of members of the colonies’ mixed-race “mulatto” population and the educated minority among the blacks, who enthusiastically embraced the new regime.

An Expanding Empire

The new republican government, particularly under Jules Ferry’s leadership, adopted an activist policy of imperial expansion with important implications for France’s future. France’s defeat in 1870 and the creation of Bismarck’s unified German Empire had weakened the country’s international position. Important reforms begun in the 1870s promised to give France an army better able to stand up to the Germans, but only the most optimistic imagined that France could successfully defeat its powerful new neighbor and regain the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. Bismarck was able to use the threat of renewed hostilities to compel the French government to humiliating concessions in 1875, and the Republic was left out of important international conferences, such as the one that concluded the Russo-Turkish War of 1878.

During his terms as prime minister, Jules Ferry—in agreement with his rival Gambetta and with Catholic supporters of foreign missions on this issue—tried to restore France’s international position by pursuing colonial expansion overseas. Acting on his own, without parliamentary approval, he sent French troops to occupy Tunisia in 1881. In 1882, he and Gambetta pushed the Chamber to endorse the French explorer Pierre de Brazza’s acquisition of extensive territories in western Africa for the Republic. In 1883 to 1885, Ferry proclaimed a French protectorate over the several kingdoms of Indochina (modern-day Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). In the scramble for African colonies, Ferry was even willing to cooperate with the Germans. To thwart British claims, he pushed Bismarck to convene a diplomatic congress in Berlin in 1884 to 1885 at which the European powers agreed on guidelines for the division of the African continent. By 1900, France had appropriated most of West Africa and a number of colonies in the Congo region further south, as well as the large island of Madagascar off southern Africa’s east coast and the territory of Djibouti on the Red Sea.

Assailed by critics who argued that these adventures in distant parts were distracting France from the task of preparing for a future clash with Germany, Ferry replied that colonial expansion was vital to help France reassert its international standing and achieve economic prosperity. “Everywhere, in all matters where our interests and our honor are engaged,” Ferry said in 1882, “it is our will and our duty to obtain for France the standing she deserves.”⁶ Because major countries were moving to protect their domestic markets by raising tariffs, Ferry argued, colonies were also a matter of economic necessity: France needed new territories as captive markets for its goods and outlets for investment. The expanded empire also provided an opportunity to spread

French culture and the French language around the world. The *Alliance française*, an organization founded in 1882 that still exists today, devoted itself to promoting “francophonie,” a word coined in 1886, both in the colonies and in other countries. More radical republicans denounced Ferry for “a policy that ... engages our flag and spends our money on distant adventures,” and for diverting attention from the duty of recovering Alsace-Lorraine.⁷ Opposition to Ferry’s colonial initiatives contributed to his final fall from office in 1885. Despite his critics, he left behind a much expanded empire that succeeding governments continued to enlarge.

To modern eyes, the spread of French imperialism seems to reflect an unwarranted assumption about European racial and cultural superiority. There is no question that French rule was often imposed by naked force and native populations were exploited for the economic benefit of the metropole. Although the Third Republic institutionalized democratic freedoms for citizens of European France, it exercised arbitrary authority over its colonial subjects. The 1881 *indigénat* law allowed the authorities to imprison “natives” arbitrarily. They could be forced to work on French projects and to pay special taxes. French settlers and a few privileged natives were exempt from the *indigénat*, although they, too, often complained that they were not allowed to govern themselves. At the time, however, bringing the benefits of advanced civilization to the non-European world seemed, to many in France and elsewhere, almost a moral duty—or, in the common French phrase, a *mission civilisatrice* (civilizing mission). To leaders like Ferry, it was also a way of proving that France had recovered from the defeat of 1870 and of giving their fellow citizens faith in the nation’s future. Only a handful of critics saw that the maintenance of the Empire conflicted with the democratic principles of French republicanism.

The Social Bases of the Republic

The greatest paradox of the Third Republic was that it combined democratic political institutions that struck contemporaries in many other countries as almost revolutionary with a profound social conservatism. The republicans who took office at the end of the 1870s had absorbed Thiers’s conviction that the Republic would only survive if it demonstrated that its institutions were compatible with existing social hierarchies and with the protection of the rights of property. To be sure, the Republic was equally far from proclaiming that the rich had a natural right to special privileges. Gambetta coined one of his most famous phrases when he insisted that a democratic republic was necessary to incorporate what he called “*les nouvelles couches sociales*,” (new strata of society) into the political system. Deliberately vague, Gambetta’s phrase nevertheless signaled that wealthy notables who had dominated French political life since the first Napoleonic Empire would have to share their hegemony with men of humbler origins. In practice, however, this broadening of political opportunities hardly extended beyond the middle classes, and it remained limited to men. The newly enfranchised members of these groups joined with their social betters to maintain a social hierarchy that marginalized those below them. Furthermore, the old elites proved remarkably resourceful at finding ways to maintain their privileged social and economic status even in the context of a democratic political system.

The Third Republic’s openness to men from modest middle-class backgrounds was most evident in electoral politics. The small, single-member districts from which deputies were elected allowed energetic local personalities to impose themselves. The

landowners, lawyers, and wealthy businessmen who had dominated the parliamentary assemblies of the July Monarchy and the Second Empire slowly made way for deputies and local officials who were notaries, shopkeepers, or schoolteachers. These small businessmen and modestly educated professionals represented the interests of small property owners in general, including the landowning peasants who continued to form the largest group in France's electorate. They faithfully reflected the parochial interests of their constituents, opposing measures that would mean increased taxes or additional government regulations imposed on them, and supporting policies that benefited shopkeepers and small farmers.

While the Third Republic thus accommodated the interests of small property owners, it also managed to protect the standing of wealthy elites who had prospered during the July Monarchy and the Second Empire. Aristocratic titles, although no longer officially recognized, still conveyed great social prestige. Descendants of the nobility still held a disproportionate share of positions in professions such as the army officer corps and the diplomatic service, whose criteria of recruitment included the candidate's ability to conduct himself in polite society. Despite occasional rhetorical outbursts against the power of big business in the Assembly, the Republic was not opposed to the interests of large enterprises. Indeed, in the period from 1870 to 1914, big businessmen increased their fortunes at a much faster rate than the more modest entrepreneurs of the petty bourgeoisie. The introduction of universal free primary education had been meant to provide a minimum of education and opportunity to children from humble backgrounds, but wealthy families who intended to send their children to the *lycée* for further study after the primary grades, paid to enroll them in special elementary classes where they avoided contact with their social inferiors. Tuition was charged for secondary education. Many historians have seen the ostensibly democratic and egalitarian school system created by the Ferry laws as being in reality one of the main mechanisms through which social inequalities were maintained and transmitted from one generation to the next.

Within the bourgeoisie, certain groups gained more from the consolidation of the Republic than others. Middle-class members of France's Protestant and Jewish minorities were particularly at home in the new atmosphere. They welcomed the Third Republic's commitment to secularism and usually shared its leaders' faith in the importance of education. A number of leading republican politicians, such as Ferdinand Buisson, the longtime director of the educational system, came from Protestant backgrounds. So did a disproportionately large number of business leaders and prominent university professors. The regime also opened possibilities for French Jews, who achieved positions of prominence in journalism, academia, and the professions. The Jewish publisher Félix Alcan, for example, put out almost all the serious books in philosophy published in France around the turn of the century. He was typical of a prosperous Jewish elite that had completely assimilated French values and lifestyles.

Rural Decline

While the Third Republic thus offered new opportunities to some groups, others faced varying degrees of difficulty. The peasantry, solidly converted to republicanism in many regions of the country, derived some benefits from the extension of schooling and new access to the wider world provided by railroads, the popular press, and other new forms of contact with urban civilization. But the period was one in which many

problems plagued agriculture. Even government sympathy to farmers' complaints could not provide them with protection against these economic crises. In response, the rural exodus that had affected only a limited number of regions in the first half of the century became more general. Between 1871 and 1914, 60 of France's 80 odd departments lost population. While the pace of this rural exodus was slower than in Britain or Germany, it was sufficiently striking to create the sense that a traditional way of life, deeply rooted in the French past, was threatened.

The republican government, although not at all hostile to the economic interests of peasant farmers, was bent on transforming the culture of the countryside. Its school-teachers were missionaries determined to root out such vestiges of backwardness as regional dialects, particularly in areas like Brittany where local customs were often associated with loyalty to church and opposition to the Republic. The experience of military service, made compulsory for all young men in the wake of the 1870 defeat, took peasant boys out of their native communities and exposed them to new values. The growing market economy, too, broke down regional isolation. All these processes contributed to the transformation of "peasants into Frenchmen," the title of a classic book by historian Eugen Weber. But memoirs like Pierre Jakez Hélias's *The Horse of Pride*, a highly readable account of a Breton village boy's life at the turn of the century, show that there was often a psychological cost to this imposition of new, fundamentally urban, values.

Urban Workers

The place of the urban workers in the new republican society was more problematic than that of peasants. It was a basic tenet of the republican faith that workers did not form a class apart in French society, and that they would benefit from the changes the new regime introduced in the country. In fact, however, workers tended to live in distinct urban neighborhoods, and in conditions that set them apart from other groups in the population. Draft board records show that young men from working-class neighborhoods were shorter, on the average, than sons of bourgeois or peasant families, and that they more often suffered from debilitating illnesses. Public schooling did little to give the children of working-class families (who generally had to abandon their education at an early age to start earning a living) much chance for social mobility. To the extent that the Republic took cognizance of the specific problems that affected urban workers, its main policy was to encourage them to adopt values more in line with those of the bourgeoisie. Denis Poulot, the self-made entrepreneur whose book *Le Sublime* had offered a scathing indictment of the behavior of workers at the end of the Second Empire, was typical of these republican reformers in the 1880s. Elected mayor of Paris's eleventh *arrondissement*, a working-class neighborhood, he promoted the new secular schools for children and urged adult workers to educate themselves as well. In 1881, he founded a "Society for Civil Marriage" to encourage poor couples to legalize their unions and adopt the family pattern of the bourgeoisie. Poulot also patronized various schemes to encourage workers to save money and to form cooperative enterprises.

In the years after 1880, workers' styles of life did change to some extent along the lines that bourgeois reformers like Poulot had hoped. Stable marriages became more frequent, as working-class neighborhoods ceased to be composed primarily of young single men recently arrived from the countryside. Literacy rates rose as schooling

became more widespread. The period after 1880 saw a gradual improvement in real wages and in living standards. Workers were able to afford a more diversified diet and, indeed, generally ate better than peasants. But the notion that, by saving and investing, workers could convert themselves into small property owners—and thus integrate themselves into the world that bourgeois republicans like Poulot had created—remained a utopian one. Rather than accepting such advice, many workers turned to movements that maintained that workers' interests were in fact opposed to those of the property-owning classes. Disrupted by the defeat of the Paris Commune, socialist groups began to reappear by the late 1870s. In 1879, a congress of workers' deputies in Marseille called for the creation of a workers' political party—testimony to a growing sense of identity and of isolation from the rest of society on the part of the more articulate members of the working class.

The nature of the French middle class was also changing during this period. In addition to business owners and educated professionals, the bourgeoisie now included a rapidly growing number of white-collar workers, such as shop attendants and office clerks. "Bourgeois" by virtue of their education, the fact that they did not perform manual labor, and their style of life, they lacked one of the essential attributes of classical bourgeois status: they did not live on income from individually owned property. Social critics complained that men of this sort lacked real taste and education, and that they were undermining the cultural hierarchy that had defined bourgeois society.

The stability of the Third Republic was due in good part to the fact that the regime responded to the interests of groups whose members made up a majority of the electorate—members of the various elements of the bourgeoisie and middle classes, on the one hand, and peasants, on the other. This republican social coalition excluded the industrial working class, whose disaffection from the system was to become increasingly significant as time went on. Women, although excluded from politics, formed a less homogeneous group whose sentiments toward the regime are hard to assess. With its solid base of social support, the new political regime was able to put down stronger roots than any of its nineteenth-century predecessors.

Notes

- 1 Stanley Hoffmann, "Paradoxes of the French Political Community," in Stanley Hoffmann ed., *In Search of France* (New York: Harper, 1963), 17.
- 2 Cited in Jacques Ozouf, *Nous les maîtres d'école* (Paris: Julliard/Gallimard, 1973), 175.
- 3 Ferdinand Buisson, *Nouveau Dictionnaire de pédagogie et d'instruction primaire* (Institut française de l'éducation, 1911), on-line edition.
- 4 Cited in Linda L. Clark, *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1984), 17.
- 5 Citations in Sylvain Venayre, "1882. Professer la nation," in Patrick Boucheron et al., eds., *Histoire mondiale de la France* (Paris: Seuil, 2018), 698–9.
- 6 Cited in Pierre Guillan, *L'Expansion 1881–1898* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1984), 177.
- 7 Ibid., 110.

18 Economic Depression and Political Crises

The founders of the Third Republic, like Léon Gambetta, had assumed that a democratic regime would enjoy broad support and that its only serious opposition would come from groups loyal to the past, who were doomed to disappear as the new values promoted by the Republic spread. It soon became clear, however, that support for the new regime was less universal than its founders had expected. By the end of the 1880s, only a decade after the Republic had firmly established itself, it faced the first of the major political crises that would punctuate its existence, the Boulanger affair. Despite some important policy successes in the 1890s, the Third Republic found itself under constant attack from both the left, which accused it of neglecting the lower classes, and from new conservative movements that denounced its supposed weakness in defending national interests.

The Late-Nineteenth-Century “Great Depression”

One reason for the difficulties in the early decades of republican supremacy was the economic climate. After the period of prosperity and economic growth that characterized the Second Empire, especially in its first decade, came a prolonged period in which the French economy (together with those of the other industrialized nations) experienced a marked slowdown. This “Great Depression of the Nineteenth Century,” lasting from 1873 to 1896, differed in important ways from the more devastating depression that afflicted the world in the 1920s and 1930s. It entailed a slowing of growth, but not a severe economic contraction, and it did not affect living standards as strongly because unemployment was not as severe and prices of consumer goods actually fell faster than wages. It nevertheless colored the economic climate in France for two decades.

Among the hardest hit by the economic downswing were French farmers, for whom the period—in sharp contrast to the prosperity of the Second Empire—was one of multiple problems. The most devastating setback hit French winegrowers. From 1863, an insect-borne disease, *phylloxera*, had begun to spread in French vineyards. By the late 1870s, it had become a veritable epidemic, killing the vines that produced France’s second most important crop. French wine production, which had reached an all-time high in 1875, dropped by more than two-thirds before bottoming out in 1887. Frantic experimentation showed that the most successful treatment was to pull up the affected plants and replace them with disease-resistant American grapevines. Healthy branches from French plants could then be grafted onto the new rootstock to produce the special varieties on which famous French vintages depended. While this procedure saved the wine industry, it required heavy investment that forced many small producers to abandon wine-growing.

The *phylloxera* epidemic coincided with other agricultural difficulties. In the region around Lyon, silk growers found themselves swamped by cheaper foreign thread. Unlike the wine trade, their business never recovered. The same fate overtook the growers of plants used to make dyes for the textile industry, whose products were increasingly replaced by synthetic chemicals. Industrial development threatened French grain growers, too. Cheaper transportation made foreign imports less expensive, driving grain prices down by 27 percent from 1871 to 1875 to 1895. France's peasant farmers, with their small holdings, lacked the resources to adopt efficient, mechanized methods. A sharp drop in sugar prices after 1884 hurt growers in Martinique and Guadeloupe and sharpened social tensions between the islands' different racial groups.

For France's industrial sector, too, the period was one of difficulty. By the 1880s, French industry had established the geographic pattern it would retain until the late twentieth century. Mining and metalworking had replaced textiles as the most important industrial sector. The embattled coalminers of Emile Zola's *Germinal*, the period's classic novel about working-class life, lived in the Nord, the region along the Belgian frontier, which was one of the main centers of heavy industry. Other industrial concentrations were in Lorraine, where newly discovered deposits of iron ore made up for the loss of resources taken by Germany in 1871; in the region around Lyon and Saint-Etienne; and along the southern edge of the Massif Central. Rouen remained a major center of textile production, while the largest center of the chemical industry was in Lyon. Paris was a center for many kinds of light manufacturing and luxury trades. Regions that had been centers of production dependent on old-fashioned methods that were no longer competitive, such as Brittany and the southwestern area around Bordeaux, suffered a relative and, in some cases, an absolute decline in prosperity and population. In a country where more than half the population was still rural, the agricultural depression meant a reduced consumer market, which slowed the growth of manufacturing. The heavy spending on public works characteristic of the Second Empire also tailed off under the Republic. This was especially true when the government curtailed spending on the expensive Freycinet railroad expansion plan in 1883. The collapse in 1882 of the *Union générale*, one of the country's most important banks, dealt a heavy blow to the credit market and made lenders cautious about supporting business ventures.

International conditions prevented France from expanding its sales abroad to make up for the contraction at home. As her foreign competitors built larger factories and achieved higher levels of efficiency, French products proved to be too expensive to compete effectively. By the end of the century France, which had been the world's second manufacturing nation until 1870, slipped to a poor fourth place—far behind its rivals. The multiple problems besetting French agriculture and industry gave a strong impetus for reversal of the free-trade policy that Napoleon III had imposed in 1860 in an effort to promote economic development. A tariff law voted in 1881 and implemented the following year marked the abandonment of free-trade principles, although the rates it imposed were relatively low. It also left the government considerable flexibility to negotiate agreements with other countries. Agriculturists and manufacturers who faced strong foreign competition kept up agitation for a stronger law throughout the 1880s. Their combined efforts were finally successful in 1892, when Jules Méline, a staunch defender of agricultural interests, guided a new tariff bill through parliament. The Méline tariff set considerably higher rates on imported products, from 12 to 30 percent. It provided French producers with a well-guarded domestic market, and the principle of protection was not to be challenged again until the 1950s.

One argument used to support the demand for protection was the claim that tariffs would encourage French industrialists to invest in making themselves more efficient, since they would be able to rely on a guaranteed market for their goods. On the whole, however, the high-tariff policy failed to produce this effect. Freed from the threat of foreign competition, French manufacturers often saw little need to improve their methods. The relatively static French market gave them little incentive to expand production. France's low birth rate during the 1880s and 1890s deprived the economy of an important stimulus that encouraged industrial development in countries like Germany and the United States.

To the dismay of many contemporary observers, French capital was invested more and more heavily abroad after 1880. French overseas investments during this period were second only to those of Britain, and the country played a crucial role in financing the development of many regions around the world. Overseas investment increased French leverage in strategic areas, particularly Russia, with which France formed an alliance against Germany in the early 1890s. Argument has continued ever since as to whether this diversion of French capital beyond the country's borders weakened domestic industrial growth, or whether the economy as a whole benefitted from the high dividends many of these investments earned until the First World War. The current scholarly consensus holds that the flow of capital abroad essentially reflected France's inability to employ its resources productively at home. Enough capital was available to underwrite domestic development where market conditions warranted it, but the overall structure of the French economy militated against rapid and widespread growth during this period.

The Boulanger Affair

The legislative elections of 1877 and 1881 had been essential steps toward the consolidation of a republican majority. By the time of the next national elections, in 1885, however, disillusionment with the new regime was setting in. Discontent caused by hard economic times was one reason for this; another was the fact that the moderate Opportunist republicans had largely exhausted their political agenda after the enactment of the Ferry laws. As they settled into defending the new status quo, a more radical republican current began to assert itself and denounce their growing conservatism. The most prominent Radical deputy of the period was Georges Clemenceau. Clemenceau had entered political life with the fall of Louis-Napoleon, winning election as mayor of the Paris suburb of Montmartre and trying to act as a mediator between the Thiers government and the Paris Commune. After the republican victory of 1877 had been consolidated, Clemenceau became a fierce critic of the Opportunist leaders, denouncing them for abandoning the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine in favor of overseas expansion. He also criticized them for making no further effort to reform undemocratic aspects of the 1875 constitution (such as the role of the Senate), and for ignoring the problems of the lower classes.

With voters blaming the economic slowdown on the governing Opportunists, radical candidates were able to make strong gains in the 1885 elections. So did the rightwing opposition, producing a Chamber divided into three approximately equal blocks, making the formation of a stable ministry difficult. As the Chamber of Deputies bogged down in inconclusive debates, public opinion toward the new republican institutions began to cool. In 1886, the British ambassador to Paris wrote that the

Republic had lasted 16 years, “and that is about the time it takes the French to tire of a form of government.”¹ By 1887, the Third Republic was facing the first of many crises that would punctuate its history, one in which powerful forces challenged the basic institution of parliamentary democracy.

The crisis that lasted from 1887 to 1889 crystallized around General Georges Boulanger, a popular and outspoken military officer of radical republican views. The Radicals had engineered Boulanger’s appointment as minister of war in 1886 as part of their price for a coalition with the moderates. Boulanger used the position as a platform to build a personal following. He posed as champion of the common man, improving the conditions of ordinary soldiers and flamboyantly encouraging military units sent to control strikes to fraternize with the workers. He also delighted patriotic opinion by provoking the Germans almost to the brink of war in 1887. Boulanger’s recklessness and his growing personal appeal alarmed the cautious politicians who dominated the cabinet, and a ministerial reshuffle in 1887 led to his dismissal as war minister. The general’s followers turned to the streets and to the ballot box. They put his name forward in several by-elections in the early months of 1888, and Boulanger scored a series of striking successes.

As Boulanger marched from one political triumph to the next, he united more and more of the groups who opposed the Third Republic behind his banner. The regime was in poor shape to defend itself. In December 1887, Jules Grévy, the moderate republican who had replaced MacMahon, was forced to resign for tolerating scandals in his office. Initially, Boulanger’s appeal had been mainly to the left. His first supporters had been Radical Republicans, and his populist rhetoric had won over many workers and members of the petty bourgeoisie. His nationalism attracted supporters such as Paul Déroulède, the founder of the *Ligue des patriotes*—a movement launched with widespread republican support in 1881 that had increasingly identified French national interests with replacement of parliamentary government by a more authoritarian regime. But by 1888, Boulanger was also recruiting support from the conservative right, which saw in his mass appeal a chance to undermine the republicans’ hegemony. Both sides sought to keep these contacts secret, but by 1888, the Boulangist movement was being largely funded by sympathizers from the monarchist camp.

In January 1889, Boulanger challenged the moderate republicans in the capital itself, which had been one of their electoral strongholds since the days of the Empire. Drawing votes from both the left and the right, he won a resounding victory for a parliamentary seat. His supporters now planned to nominate him as a candidate in every electoral district in France in the upcoming general elections, and thus put him in power in a virtual plebiscite. In the face of this challenge, republican parliamentarians rushed through changes in the election laws to prohibit candidates from running in more than one district. Fearing that the government intended to move against him, Boulanger showed that he lacked the courage of a real conspirator. He abandoned his supporters and fled across the border to Belgium on April 1, 1889.

With its leader disgraced, the Boulangist movement rapidly disintegrated. The publication of documents about Boulanger’s rightwing contacts dismayed his republican and socialist supporters, and Boulanger himself committed suicide in 1891. Despite Boulanger’s disappearance and the apparent victory of parliamentary republicanism, the two years of Boulangist agitation had profoundly altered the French political landscape. The fact that a relative nonentity such as the general could cast himself for

the role of Napoleon and come close to succeeding was disquieting. The participation of many socialists in the Boulangist movement marked their growing separation from the republican mainstream. From the time of Boulanger onward, the presence of an autonomous socialist movement critical of “bourgeois” republicanism became a permanent feature of the French political scene. In their disenchantment with Boulanger, however, the socialists and the republicans began to separate themselves from the ultrapatriotic nationalists, while conservatives learned from the Boulanger experience that nationalism could serve their purposes and win them a new mass base. Movements like Déroulède’s *Ligue des patriotes*, originally oriented toward the left, now began to be counted as part of the right.

The republican parliamentarians who held off Boulanger did not have long to savor their success. In the midst of the Boulanger crisis, a French company formed to dig a canal in Panama had gone bankrupt. Large sums were at stake in the Panama affair, and those concerned had made payoffs to a number of republican deputies to protect their interests. In September 1892, the anti-Semitic journalist Edouard Drumont, a former Boulangist, exposed the scandal. After furious debates, the Chamber created a commission of inquiry, which found several-dozen deputies (including many of the most prominent Opportunists as well as the Radical leader Clemenceau) to have been involved. The Panama scandal ended the careers of many of the first generation of republicans. More importantly, it helped create a deep-seated distrust of the country’s parliamentary leadership.

Socialism, Anarchism, and Trade Unions

The 1893 elections disposed of many of the republican deputies tainted by the Panama scandal; the voters also elected some 50 socialist deputies. This new challenge from the left, and the question of whether it should be met by a broad union of conservative groups (including the Catholics against whom the republican regime had fought since its inception), dominated parliamentary life for the next few years. Most of the short-lived ministries that held office in the mid-1890s, as well as the more long-lasting combination put together by Jules Méline—the advocate of economic protectionism—from 1896 to 1898, leaned to the right. Panama had discredited the Opportunist label, but not the party’s policies. A new set of moderate republican leaders, calling themselves Progressists, continued many of them.

To the left of the republican bloc, the socialist movement emerged as a major feature of French political life. Workers turned to socialism in response to economic hardship and to incidents such as the massacre at Fourmies in 1890, where nine workers were killed when soldiers opened fire on a demonstration. Socialism had particular appeal in heavily industrialized areas where workers were concentrated in large enterprises, such as the region of the Nord with its mines and textile plants. The first socialist political parties had developed in the early 1880s in response to initiatives from the national workers’ congresses that had been held in the late 1870s. Instead of developing into one large, unified party, as in Germany, the French movement divided into several fractions, united only in their condemnation of the capitalist economic system and the liberal political institutions that had grown up with it. At a national conference in Saint-Etienne in 1882, the French socialists split into two groups. One was the *Parti Ouvrier Français*, headed by Jules Guesde, the French socialist most influenced by Karl Marx’s ideas, which he had encountered during his years in exile after the Commune uprising.

Guesde maintained that there could be no cooperation between the industrial working class, the proletariat, and its bourgeois foes. The purpose of a socialist political party was to educate workers and organize them into a powerful political party that would ultimately carry out a revolution against the bourgeois capitalist order. For Guesde and his followers, participation in “bourgeois” politics was important only as a means of spreading the socialist message, whose triumph would inevitably occur as a result of the growth of the proletariat. Other forms of working-class activity, notably the formation of trade unions, took second place in the Guesdists’ thinking, since—according to Guesde’s interpretation of Marx—union activity could not make significant improvements in the condition of workers doomed to exploitation as long as capitalism existed. Guesde’s movement appealed particularly to the downtrodden and relatively uneducated workers in France’s northern textile cities. The department of the Nord, along the Belgian border, became its strongest bastion.

Guesde’s rigid definition of socialism brought him into conflict with militants who came to the movement from different backgrounds, and who were less impressed with the authority of Marx’s teachings. The 1882 split separated the Guesdists from a rival group that came to be known as the *Possibilistes*—a term invented by its main spokesman, Paul Brousse, to describe his policy of supporting whatever reforms proved possible under the existing republican system. Brousse, for example, urged socialists to seek local municipal offices, if necessary in coalition with the Radicals. In opposition to Guesde’s movement, the Possibilists formed their own party, the Federation of French Socialist Workers.

Not all French working-class militants accepted the emphasis on political activity that the Guesdists and the Possibilists shared. An anarchist movement, inspired in part by the writings of Proudhon, turned its back on electioneering and on reformist trade unionism. “As far as I am concerned, only direct action in the streets can bring about the Revolution,” the Lyon anarchist Toussaint Bordat proclaimed in 1886.² During the early 1890s, French anarchist militants, like those in other countries, sometimes turned to violent “propaganda of the deed,” setting off explosives in public places and staging assassinations in the hope of inspiring workers to revolt against the established order. The assassination of president Sadi Carnot in 1894 marked the high point of these anarchist attacks. The government countered with repressive legislation, the so-called *lois scélérates*, which handicapped leftwing political activity and violated the liberal principles proclaimed by the regime. Anarchist violence gradually faded, but such direct action remained a temptation for extremist groups of the left and the far right. The anarchist critique of conventional political action not only led to individualistic violence but also encouraged trade union organization and direct challenges to employers. In 1890, a number of members quit Brousse’s Possibilist movement to follow Jean Allemane, whose *Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire* emphasized such a policy.

The early 1890s saw steady growth in trade union activity. French workers had learned to use the strike weapon with increasing effectiveness during the 1880s, waiting for moments when employers had little choice but to make concessions. Taking advantage of the 1884 law that legalized such associations, unions—often born as strike committees—became more stable. Alongside the unions, the *bourses de travail*, or labor centers, set up in many industrial cities—often with the support of local governments—served as employment bureaus and defended working-class interests. In 1895, the organization of the *Confédération Générale de Travail* (CGT) gave the labor movement a national structure. Having grown out of the union movement and the

experience of the *bourses de travail*, the CGT was heavily influenced by militants convinced that direct economic action was more important than participation in electoral politics. In contrast to the close connection of unions and leftwing political parties in Britain and Germany, the French union movement thus remained aloof from the country's socialist parties. Rather than achieving power through the ballot box, labor militants preached the notion of a general strike. If all workers quit their jobs at once, they could bring the entire bourgeois capitalist system to its knees. Syndicalist rhetoric about *le grand soir* that would sweep away the capitalist system inspired workers and stoked bourgeois fears, contributing to the tense social atmosphere of the period.

The divisions between the union movement and the socialist parties, and the splits among the latter, slowed the growth of all the leftwing organizations, which remained smaller than in neighboring countries such as Britain or Germany. At the local level, however, the differences in doctrine that divided the various socialist, anarchist, and labor groups often became blurred. Labor militants usually worked together, and the majority of the parliamentary candidates who won election under the socialist label in the 1890s were "independents" who belonged to none of the organized groups, and who were often willing to collaborate with the more radical republicans. Ideological division thus proved less crippling to the growth of socialism and working-class movements than might have been expected.

Catholics and the Republic

While socialists opposed the republic from the left, French Catholics formed a conservative opposition on the right. Ever since the Restoration period, Catholicism had been strongly identified with monarchism. Pope Pius IX, the head of the church from 1846 to 1878, had condemned the basic principles of liberalism, democracy, and socialism as contrary to Christian teachings in his *Syllabus of Errors*, issued in 1864. After the republican victory in 1877, most of the Catholic hierarchy in France urged the faithful to have as little as possible to do with the new institutions. Women, who made up much of the church's base of support, were in any event excluded from political participation. Popular Catholic journalists like Louis Veuillot, whose paper strongly influenced the parish clergy, denounced the republicans and kept alive the hope of a monarchist restoration. The Ferry laws, which included measures banning the Jesuits and other Catholic orders that had never obtained government authorization for their activities in France, deepened the gulf between church and state, even though the republican legislators stopped short of an all-out assault on the Church. Catholic schools continued to operate, and the Napoleonic Concordat was not abolished—partly in order to leave the government some means of control over the clergy. The fact that many conservative Catholics supported the Boulanger movement kept republican suspicions alive.

In the wake of the Boulanger crisis, Pius IX's successor, Leo XIII, decided that the time was ripe for a serious effort to promote a *ralliement*, or "reconciliation," between Catholics and the new regime. The occasion came when the archbishop of Algiers, Cardinal Lavigerie, was invited to speak to a luncheon of naval officers—most of them Catholic and monarchist in sympathies. The cardinal's words, cleared in advance with the Vatican, surprised his audience. He told them,

when the will of a people has been clearly stated, when the form of government ... contains nothing in itself contrary to the principles which alone can give life to Christian civilized nations, when there is no other way of saving one's country from the disaster that threatens it than by adhering unreservedly to that form of government, then the moment has come ... to put an end to our differences.³

Although the republican governments of the early 1890s tilted in a conservative direction and often adopted policies (such as the Méline tariff of 1892) that had a strong appeal to many Catholic voters, a genuine reconciliation between Catholics and republicans remained difficult, even with Leo XIII's blessing. Educated in a separate school system by teachers who warned against the atheistic tendencies of republicanism and inculcated a general distrust of modern ideas in their pupils, French Catholics continued to form a world apart, hostile to the political system. Like the policy of *ralliement*, the efforts of several prominent Catholic laymen and clergy to show that the church could offer meaningful solutions to the period's growing social problems achieved only limited success. This Social Catholic movement had roots in the writings of Lamennais and in the philanthropic efforts of Catholics in the 1830s and 1840s, who had condemned Guizot's liberalism for its indifference to the fate of the working class. In the 1880s and 1890s, Social Catholicism developed in two directions. An elitist version, led by wealthy noblemen such as Albert de Mun and the Marquis de la Tour du Pin, sought to convince the upper classes of their Christian duty to ameliorate the condition of the poor. At the same time, it tried to win workers away from socialist doctrines of class warfare. De Mun, a deputy, supported legislative measures to provide workers with insurance against accidents, illness, and unemployment at a time when most republicans remained resolutely hostile to what they saw as state interference with the individual rights of employers and workers.

Some supporters of la Tour du Pin's and de Mun's Social Catholic ideas recognized that the organizations they founded to promote them had a fatal weakness. Organized from the top down, they appeared to most workers as thinly disguised efforts to keep them under control. A few priests and the factory owner Léon Harmel urged the formation of genuinely worker-run unions and other organizations, such as youth groups and sports clubs, but the church hierarchy remained suspicious of initiatives not firmly under its control. Marc Sangnier, a charismatic young activist, gave this more democratic branch of Social Catholicism a new impetus at the turn of the century. His movement, the *Sillon* (Furrow), expressed sympathy for revolutionary movements, workers' cooperatives, and pacifism, and urged political cooperation with non-Catholic groups. Sangnier influenced a generation of young idealists, many of whom would come to prominence after the First World War, but the *Sillon*'s radicalism and its openness to cooperation with non-Catholics led to its being condemned by the Vatican in 1910.

The Franco-Russian Treaty and the Fashoda Crisis

Domestic issues were not the only ones concerning the French during the 1890s. Decisions taken during these years would eventually lead France into the near-catastrophe of the Great War in 1914. The achievement of national security and defense of the country's standing in world affairs had preoccupied France's leaders

ever since the defeat of 1870. The German annexation of Alsace and half of Lorraine was, of course, a painful memory for the French, and one to which public opinion never became fully reconciled. Schoolroom maps marked the “lost provinces” in black and textbooks like the immensely successful *Two Children’s Tour of France*—whose child-heroes hailed from Alsace—transmitted the conviction to new generations that those territories were French. But by the 1880s, talk of a war of revenge to regain the lost provinces had cooled. French foreign policy was shaped by perceptions of what was needed to maintain national security and to sustain France’s international position, not by an emotional crusade to regain Alsace and Lorraine.

The Franco-Prussian War left France isolated in Europe. Bismarck, the architect of German unification, worked skillfully to keep France without allies. He succeeded in making alliances with Austria-Hungary and then Russia, so that France faced a solid bloc of the major continental powers. He also carefully avoided provoking Britain. As long as Bismarck’s system prevailed, French options were very limited. Jules Ferry’s imperialist policy, justified partly as a means of showing that France could still play a dynamic role in world affairs, threatened to isolate the country even more. It was bound to cause disputes with Britain, the world’s other major imperial power. Bismarck quietly encouraged French overseas expansionism for precisely this reason. Knowing that they might have to face Germany alone if a new war broke out, French military planners after 1871 adopted an essentially defensive strategy.

The breakdown of Bismarck’s diplomatic system finally allowed France to end its isolation. The weak point of Bismarck’s policy was the need to maintain friendly relations with two powers who were at odds with each other, Austria and Russia. By 1887, the Germans made it clear that they would back Austria, and Berlin tried to pressure the Russians by blocking loans to them. The Russian government turned to the Paris market, floating an initial loan there in 1888. The Russians at first held back on diplomatic contacts, however. France’s democratic and republican constitution was anathema to the absolutist Tsarist regime. But fear of isolation in the face of the German-dominated Triple Alliance—which linked Germany, Austria, and Italy—finally drove France and Russia together.

Diplomatic contacts between Paris and St. Petersburg began in 1890. The French fleet visited Russia in 1891, and in 1892, negotiators put together a military convention in which each country promised to come to the aid of the other in case of a German or Austro-Hungarian attack. Government-backed press campaigns, especially in the mass-circulation *Petit Parisien*, gradually moved French public opinion—initially hostile to the Tsarist regime—toward acceptance of an alliance. In the French Chamber, deputies did raise questions about the extent of France’s commitment, particularly if Russia became involved in a war with Austria over the Balkans, an area in which French interests were limited. But the advantages of the treaty seemed obvious. When Russian sailors visited Paris in 1893, an observer recorded that “the city trembled with joy ... There was a new feeling of security, after a long period of isolation.”⁴ The Franco-Russian Treaty, officially ratified in 1894, seemed to restore the balance between France and Germany. Between 1898 and 1902, the French followed up this achievement by negotiating a rapprochement with their Italian neighbors, with whom a conflict over influence in Tunisia and a long-running tariff dispute had embittered relations.

In the meantime, however, a France rendered more confident by its alliance with Russia had come very close to a war with its imperial rival, Britain. The two countries had had conflicting designs on crucial territory in Africa since the early 1880s. At that

time the British succeeded in gaining predominance in Egypt, a territory in which the French had had an interest since Napoleon's day. British imperialists dreamed of acquiring a continuous strip of African territories "from the Cape to Cairo," and building a railroad that would link all their East African holdings. To do so, they needed to control the Sudan, the vast territory along the Nile south of Egypt where native resistance had halted their penetration. Meanwhile, the French sent an expedition to open an east-west route linking their holdings in West Africa to the colony of Djibouti on the Red Sea. On September 18, 1898, a large British force headed for the Sudan encountered the French Captain Marchand's smaller unit at the oasis of Fashoda. Both commanders had orders not to yield, and a showdown seemed inevitable. The press in both countries whipped up bellicose sentiment. In France, where a potent "colonial party" of business interests, publicists, and missionary groups had made imperialism more popular than it had been in the time of Ferry, a hit song hailed "the heroes who crossed Africa and planted the French flag on the banks of the Nile."⁵

Preoccupied by this time with the Dreyfus affair, the French government soon realized the danger of this war agitation. France could not simultaneously take on Britain all over the globe and be ready to oppose Germany in Europe. The memory of 1870 ruled out the idea of an anti-British alliance with the Germans, and so the French government decided after several months to back down. An agreement signed in March 1899 recognized Britain's claim to the Sudan. It was the first major initiative of Théophile Delcassé, who was to remain French foreign minister until 1905, and who was to make reconciliation with Britain the centerpiece of French policy.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Eugen Weber, *Fin du siècle*, P. Belamare, trans. (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 139.
- 2 Cited in Yves Lequin, *Les Ouvriers de la région lyonnaise* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1977), 2:283.
- 3 Cited in David Thomson, ed., *France: Empire and Republic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 245.
- 4 Cited in Pierre Milza, *Les relations internationales de 1871 à 1914* (Paris: Colin, 1968), 118–119.
- 5 Cited in Raoul Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris: Table Ronde, 1972), 149.

19 The Dreyfus Affair and the *Bloc Républicain*

Dreyfus

Many of the intellectual and cultural currents of the 1890s played a role in shaping the spectacular crisis that dominated French public opinion at the end of the decade—the Dreyfus affair. For months, France’s fate seemed to depend on that of an obscure army captain named Alfred Dreyfus. Writers and artists were among those most engaged in the controversy, which pitted proponents of rationalism and individualism against those who proclaimed that the emotional ties of race and nation were all-important. The Dreyfus affair accelerated political transformations that had begun with Boulanger, and it affected much of French politics and intellectual life well into the twentieth century.

The Dreyfus case began without much fanfare in the summer of 1894, when a cleaning woman in the German Embassy in Paris found documents indicating that a German spy had penetrated the offices of the French army general staff. Army investigators’ suspicions quickly fastened on Captain Alfred Dreyfus, whose handwriting seemed to match that on the cover sheet, or *bordereau*, that the spy had passed to the Germans. There was nothing in Dreyfus’s background to motivate such an act of treason, but one thing separated him from most of his fellow officers. They were predominantly Catholic, whereas Dreyfus was Jewish and—since his family came from Alsace—German-speaking.

The accusation that France’s defense had been betrayed by a Jew seemed to confirm the warnings that critics of the Republic’s liberal values had been spreading. Anti-Semitism had strong appeal to a variety of groups. The journalist Edouard Drumont’s best-seller *La France juive*, published in 1886, had crystallized a new kind of prejudice against France’s Jewish minority. In addition to the traditional religious accusations against the Jewish population, Drumont had added new assertions. Jewish bankers, Drumont alleged, were the promoters of an exploitative capitalism that was destroying traditional French society. Jews were aliens who could never really form part of the French nation. They dominated the press and were poisoning the wells of French culture. Drumont’s ideas found an echo in much of the Catholic press, whose journalists found it easy to charge that Jews—along with other opponents of the church such as Protestants and Freemasons—were behind the Republic’s anticlerical laws. To conservatives, nationalists, and many Catholics imbued with religious anti-Semitism, Dreyfus’s “treason” confirmed that the liberal and republican principles of liberty and equality were leading the country to disaster. The Dreyfus affair revealed the extent of popular anti-Semitism. There were anti-Semitic demonstrations in at

least 70 French cities in 1898 at the height of the agitation about the case. The most violent occurred among the European settlers in Algeria, who had always resented the grant of citizenship to the territory's Jewish population by the Crémieux law of 1870. One consequence of the wave of anti-Semitism unleashed by the Dreyfus affair was the creation of the modern Zionist (Jewish nationalist) movement. Reporting on the early stages of the case led Austrian-Jewish journalist Theodor Herzl to conclude that Jews could never become truly accepted in predominantly Christian countries—even those like France whose laws accorded them civil equality. In 1896, Herzl published *The Jewish State*, a pamphlet advocating the establishment of an independent Jewish country.

The anti-Semitic press noisily celebrated Dreyfus's conviction before a military tribunal and his sentence to life imprisonment on Devil's Island, a notorious prison off the coast of French Guiana. Initially, few outside of Dreyfus's immediate family questioned his guilt. Even the representatives of France's Jewish community, alarmed by the rise of anti-Semitism, carefully avoided appearing to come to the defense of a convicted traitor. But from the start, there were questions about the evidence used against Dreyfus and the conditions under which he had been tried. As months went by, a small group of determined supporters gained ground in their effort to get the case reopened. A Jewish journalist, Bernard Lazare, broke with the prevailing silence in his community and published pamphlets showing how flimsy the case against Dreyfus was. A republican senator, Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, undertook his own inquiries and began lobbying his colleagues to look into the matter. Within the army, an independent-minded officer, Colonel Picquart, became aware that some of the evidence against Dreyfus had been forged. Furthermore, a new suspect—Colonel Esterhazy—emerged, whose handwriting resembled that of the spy. Esterhazy, burdened with gambling debts, fit the profile of a potential security risk much better than Dreyfus.

Despite these questions, powerful forces opposed a reopening of the case. The military high command warned that an admission of such a serious error would destroy public faith in the army and thus undermine the nation's defense. Conservative jurists and politicians insisted on the importance of maintaining the principle that legal decisions, once arrived at by the proper procedures, had to be upheld, lest the authority of the courts be subverted. And the case was ready-made to mobilize a variety of constituencies on the right. The fact that Dreyfus was Jewish, and that his most prominent defenders included non-Catholics such as Lazare and the Protestant Scheurer-Kestner, drove Catholics to oppose the "revisionists" who wanted to reopen the matter. Ultranationalists like Déroulède leaped to the defense of the army, "our last honor, our last recourse, our ultimate safeguard."¹ The nationalist writer Maurice Barrès defended Dreyfus's conviction in the name of "French truth, that is, what is most useful to the nation."²

While opposition to any revision of the Dreyfus judgment provided a natural rallying point for conservatives and nationalists, the demand for justice for Dreyfus mobilized a powerful movement as well. The trial of Esterhazy in January 1898, which revealed evidence that he was the real spy, proved a turning point in the affair. Dreyfus's supporters had been convinced that he would be convicted, which would automatically have forced a revision of Dreyfus's conviction. When the military court unexpectedly acquitted Esterhazy, however, the celebrated French

novelist Emile Zola took the initiative in challenging the verdict. In a front-page editorial in *L'Aurore*, a daily paper edited by the veteran Radical Georges Clemenceau, Zola charged high-ranking army officers and magistrates of having knowingly participated in a perversion of justice. Zola's editorial, titled "*J'accuse*," ("*I accuse*") had an impact that few other newspaper columns have ever matched. As the novelist had expected, it provoked the government into bringing charges against him, which permitted a renewed debate about the case. It also served to generate a massive public mobilization in favor of Dreyfus, which was matched by an increasingly intense opposition.

The Dreyfus controversy contributed to the development of a new form of mass politics increasingly independent of conventional political parties. On both sides, leagues intended to influence public opinion rather than to run candidates for elections became key organizations. Dreyfus's supporters joined organizations such as the League for the Defense of the Rights of Man. His opponents supported Déroulède's League of Patriots, the *Ligue de la Patrie française*, or a newly founded monarchist organization, *Action française*, which was destined for a long career in French public life. Both sides pressed their cause by mass rallies and intense press propaganda. And both sides were led largely by men who defined themselves in a new way—as intellectuals, a category destined to a special role in public affairs because of their education and intelligence, rather than because of their ownership of property or their social position. The politically committed intellectual, ready to risk himself for the sake of his moral principles as Zola had done, was largely a creation of the Dreyfus affair.

In the wake of Zola's initiative, the Dreyfus affair grew from a campaign against an act of injustice to a struggle over the nature of French society. The "Affair" dominated public life for months, dividing families and friends. For those who were active on either side, it was an experience of an intensity that would never be matched again. Although Zola was actually convicted of slandering the military court, the aftermath of his trial produced unmistakable proof that some of the crucial evidence against Dreyfus had been forged. The forger, Captain Henry, committed suicide. Even after this, the army refused to absolve Dreyfus. He was brought back from Devil's Island and granted a new trial in 1899, which resulted in a renewed conviction. The French president offered him a pardon, but many of his supporters urged him to refuse it and insist on having his name cleared. Some even attacked him when—in broken health after four years of imprisonment—Dreyfus decided to accept the pardon while continuing to protest his innocence. He was finally cleared of all wrongdoing in 1906.

At the time, the Dreyfus affair seemed to be a victory for the ideal of individual rights. In the face of the combined opposition of the army, the church, the court system, and most politicians, the private citizens who had taken up Dreyfus's cause had launched the first modern crusade for human rights and had ultimately prevailed. The case attracted international attention and rejuvenated France's reputation for decades afterward as the homeland of the Rights of Man. In recent times, however, historians have been more inclined to note the long-range impact of the groups that denounced Dreyfus. They created a new model for rightwing, antidemocratic, and antiparliamentarist politics, one that anticipated twentieth-century fascist movements and present-day nationalist populism.

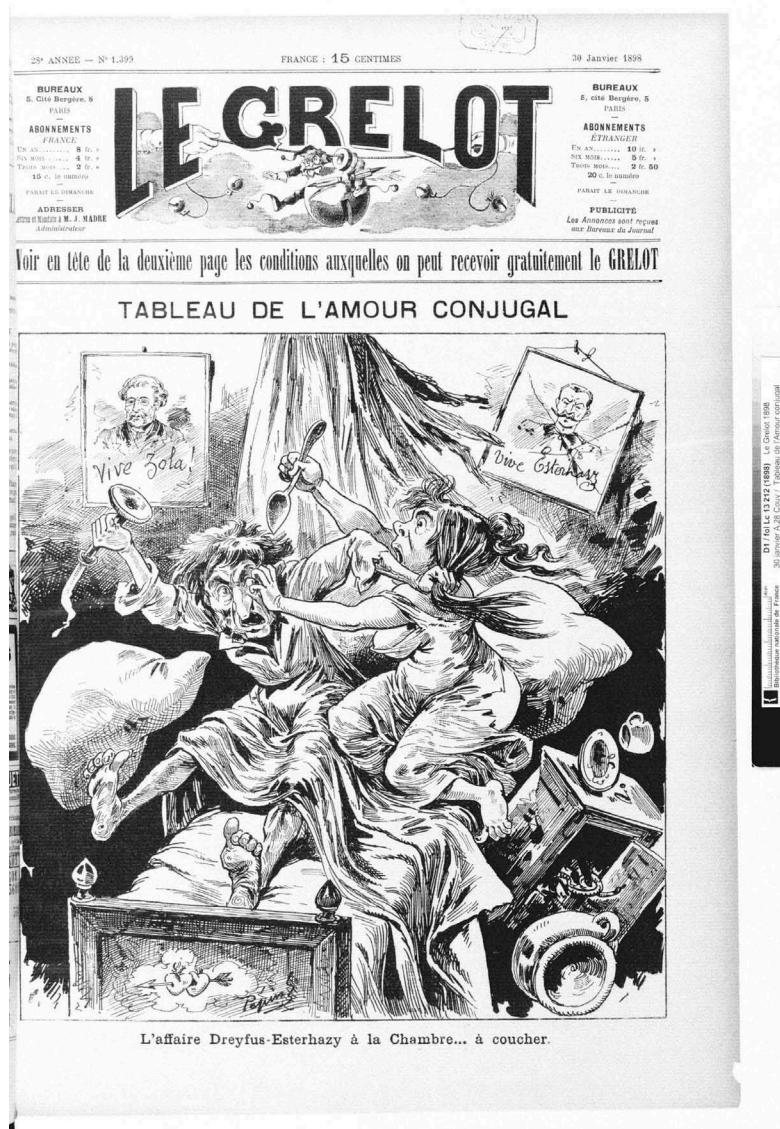


Figure 19.1 The Dreyfus Affair

A few weeks after the publication of novelist Emile Zola's fiery editorial, "J'accuse," a popular Paris humor magazine showed a husband and wife quarreling over the Dreyfus affair. The husband has a portrait of Zola on his wall, the wife one of Major Esterhazy, the actual spy. The portrayal of the wife as an anti-Dreyfusard reflects the assumption that women were generally irrational and supportive of conservative groups, such as the Catholic Church. (Photo © BnF, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/image BnF)

Anti-liberal tendencies associated with the Dreyfus affair scored a notable victory in Algeria, where anti-Jewish riots in 1898 had developed into a movement for autonomy on the part of the European colonists. To quiet these street protests, the

French government announced in August 1898, the creation of an elected assembly that the European settlers would control. Two years later, French Algeria was given special legal status and its own budget. The Algerian colonists were thus largely free to run their own affairs and dominate the much more numerous Muslim population.

The Bloc Républicain

In metropolitan France, the most visible effect of the anti-Dreyfus agitation in 1899 was the welding together of a powerful republican countermovement in response to outrages like the nationalist crowd's assault on the president of the Republic, Emile Loubet, in early 1899. In this atmosphere, republicans of all stripes and much of the socialist movement, in particular its most dynamic leader, Jean Jaurès, came together on a common platform of defense of republican and democratic institutions. Once again, as in the militant phase of the republican movement in the 1870s and 1880s, their supporters acted on the principle that there were "no enemies on the left," and that, in run-offs during parliamentary elections, socialist and republican voters should automatically unite behind whichever of their candidates had the best chance of winning—a tactic known as "republican discipline."

This common front on the left, led to the formation in 1899 of a new cabinet, headed by Waldeck-Rousseau, dedicated to a policy of "republican defense." Waldeck-Rousseau's ministers reflected the full spectrum of groups that had come to see the anti-Dreyfusard agitation as an assault on the Republic itself. The Cabinet ran from General Gallifet—a conservative republican despised by the socialists as "the butcher of the Commune" because of his role in 1871—to Alexander Millerand, an independent socialist deputy who became the first member of that movement to hold ministerial office. Millerand's acceptance of office was controversial in the socialist movement. Followers of Guesde condemned him for cooperating with bourgeois politicians, particularly men like Gallifet. But Jean Jaurès, a more flexible tactician, quietly encouraged this experiment to see whether the democratic parliamentary system could be used to enact significant social reforms.

The Waldeck-Rousseau government was determined to face down anti-republican forces that had surfaced during the Dreyfus affair. It sternly repressed rightwing agitators in the streets and shook up the army officer corps, removing officers who had been willing to go to extremes to defend the Dreyfus verdict. But the government's main thrust was against the church. The Assumptionist order, whose popular newspaper *La Croix* had been one of the main channels of anti-Semitic and anti-Dreyfus propaganda, was dissolved in 1900. A new law on associations passed in 1901, which greatly facilitated the establishment of most kinds of voluntary and nonprofit associations, tightened controls on the remaining Catholic religious congregations even as it established a flexible framework for other kinds of non-profit groups. In 1902, illness forced Waldeck-Rousseau to step down in favor of an even more militantly anticlerical republican, Emile Combes. Exasperated by the church's hostility, Combes eventually decided to completely change the ground rules of church-state relations. In 1904, his government broke relations with the Vatican. In 1905, the Assembly voted to nullify the Concordat that had governed church-state relations since Napoleon's day, and to carry out a separation of church and state.

Subsequent events were to prove that the separation enacted in 1905, rather than damaging the church, freed it from constant involvement in political controversy. In the combative atmosphere of the time, however, the enforcement of the separation law

inspired intense resistance. The law forced the closing of numerous Catholic schools whose teachers were nuns, and it required the church to allow civil officials to make an inventory of church property. In strongly Catholic regions like the Nord and Brittany, supporters barricaded their churches to keep government officials out. There were armed clashes and even a few deaths. The violence subsided once the inventory process was concluded, but the struggle had served to reinforce the divisions in French life generated by the Dreyfus affair. Devout Catholics continued to feel alienated from the “godless” French state, while republicans remained convinced that the church formed a hostile bloc whose influence had to be kept to a minimum. Public-school textbooks, which had given religion a rather neutral treatment since the 1880s, were edited to eliminate religious references altogether. The popular *Two Children’s Tour of France* was revised so that its two heroes no longer visited the famous churches in the towns they passed through.

In carrying out their measures to restrict the church’s public influence, the Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes ministries were able to count on solid support from both socialist and Radical deputies, who shared a common antipathy to the church. The atmosphere of republican militancy born in the Dreyfus struggle encouraged both these groups to organize themselves more effectively. In 1901, the Radicals—who up to that point had been nothing more than a loose network of deputies, journalists, and local clubs united on a vague platform of anticlericalism and loyalty to republican institutions—formed themselves into a cohesive political party. It was the first such modern, structured party in French history. The group’s name, the Radical and Radical-Socialist Party, showed that it hoped to appeal to a broad coalition ranging from factory workers to small businessmen, property-owning peasants, and small-town professionals who provided so many of its deputies.

The Radicals’ program was never spelled out in detail, but its guiding spirit was the doctrine of “solidarism,” articulated by one of the movement’s senior figures, Léon Bourgeois. At the 1901 party congress, Bourgeois called for a society in which the rights of property were defended, but in which a democratically governed state intervened to make sure that the poor and the weak were not trampled underfoot by more powerful groups. He looked forward to what later came to be called the “welfare state,” calling for government-provided social insurance programs and progressive taxation, so that members of all classes would realize they had a stake in the existing order. To ensure the spirit of national solidarity, the Radicals called for a unified elementary school system that would teach all French children their rights and their duties to the national community.

The Radicals’ promise of gradual reform brought them broad support. They occupied a pivotal position in the French political system down to the end of the Third Republic, sometimes allying themselves with the socialists to their left but also willing to form coalitions with more conservative groups on their right. But the very breadth and diversity of the party’s support tended to dilute its effectiveness. The Radicals never imposed strict party discipline on their parliamentary deputies, who remained free to vote against laws implementing the reform promises in its electoral program, or to pursue their personal political ambitions at the expense of the party’s agenda. To maintain its control in the Senate, dominated by small-town notables, the party frequently allied itself with more conservative groups to block progressive reforms. Eventually, the Radicals came to symbolize the political weaknesses of the French parliamentary system as a whole, particularly its inability to translate words into action.

In the first years of the new century, however, the rise of the Radicals seemed to offer an opportunity for significant changes in French society. Together with the deputies of the various socialist groups, the Radicals firmly controlled the Chamber of Deputies. The reformist cause found a powerful and attractive leader in the socialist deputy Jean Jaurès, who exercised a decisive influence, even though he did not even hold a deputy's seat between 1898 and 1902 and was never in the ministry. Jaurès's broadminded conception of democratic socialism, his personality, and his death at the hands of an assassin in 1914 have combined to give him an aura unique among Third Republic politicians. Even for many outside France, his memory long represented all that was best in the progressive tradition.

Born to a modest bourgeois family in the southern town of Castres in 1859, Jaurès had come to socialism relatively late, after an educational career that had culminated in entry to the prestigious *Ecole normale supérieure*. There, he was part of a remarkable class that included the sociologist Emile Durkheim and the philosopher Henri Bergson. Returning to his native region as a schoolteacher, Jaurès entered politics in 1885, winning the election as a republican deputy with support from local workers as well as bourgeois voters. In the 1890s, the increasingly intense conflicts between workers and employers that characterized his native region's mines and factories made him more aware of social problems.

It was during this period that Jaurès first read the writings of Karl Marx and became converted to socialism, but his ideas were considerably more supple than those of Jules Guesde. For Jaurès, socialism meant a crusade for moral justice as much as a struggle against economic oppression. In his view, the socialist movement needed to reach out to other classes besides industrial workers. He urged socialists to articulate a program that dealt with the problems of small farmers, and to be ready to cooperate with members of "bourgeois" political parties to carry out progressive reforms. He argued that the apparatus of government could be used to carry out measures that would benefit workers, even without a total socialist takeover. A systematic refusal to work within the system, as the Guesdists advocated, would only harm workers' interests.

Jaurès's growing influence within the French socialist movement during the 1890s was due not only to his imaginative adaptation of socialist doctrines to French realities but to his powerful personality. Whether addressing striking miners at Carmaux in his home district or speaking in the Chamber of Deputies, he was a spellbinding orator, the embodiment of the fiery eloquence that the French often attribute to men from the *Midi*. Firm in defense of his own principles, he nevertheless avoided bitter quarrels with opponents. When the founders of the CGT rejected any link between political and union activity in 1895, Jaurès still kept up good relations with their leaders. He worked effectively with socialist leaders from other countries in the meetings of the Second International, founded in 1889, to unite socialists throughout the world.

Once converted to the Dreyfusard cause, Jaurès sought to bring the socialist movement as a whole into the campaign. At the same time, he used the opportunity to create a genuine alliance between socialists and republicans, hoping to bring about significant social reforms. The government of republican defense was the instrument through which Jaurès hoped to demonstrate the possibility of effective cooperation between socialists and republicans. After the 1902 elections, which saw Jaurès's return to the Chamber, socialist and republican groups formed a committee, the *Délégation des Gauches* (Delegation of the Left), to set policy. Through the force of his personality, Jaurès largely dominated its activities. The Dreyfus crisis had thus created an almost unprecedented situation in the

Third Republic's history. For once, a strong and cohesive coalition controlled the Chamber and was able to carry through a consistent set of policies.

Jaurès's gamble was that the Radicals would be willing to transcend their characteristic narrow economic liberalism. Within the cabinet, the independent socialist Millerand had proposed measures that became a test of the Radicals' intentions. He sought to give labor unions more rights, and to have the government encourage collective bargaining as an alternative to strikes and labor violence. In the course of 1903 and 1904, it became increasingly apparent that these hopes were in vain. Once the rightwing threat seemed to be under control, the Radicals and the moderate republicans saw no need to abandon their traditional emphasis on limitation of government involvement in economic matters. Millerand's proposals were also rejected by trade union activists faithful to the doctrine that unions should remain apolitical. Rather than coming closer together, as Jaurès had hoped, socialists and bourgeois republicans once more began to move apart.

Notes

1 Cited in Raoul Girardet, *Le nationalisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 177.

2 Cited in Zeev Sternhell, *Le droite révolutionnaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), 170.

20 Culture and Society at the Fin De Siècle

In many ways, the basic structure of French society remained relatively stable in the decades between the consolidation of the Third Republic and the outbreak of the First World War. France remained a fundamentally bourgeois society, in contrast to its European neighbors, such as Britain and Germany, where titled aristocrats continued to enjoy important privileges. There was a slow migration from rural to urban areas, but the percentage of the population living in peasant villages and small towns was still markedly higher than in other industrial societies. The number of factory workers grew steadily, and they became increasingly vocal in demanding improvements in their lives, but the relations between this industrial proletariat and its employers were not radically changed. Some women organized to demand new rights and new forms of relations between the sexes, but these feminist activists remained a small minority. Although much of the traditional social structure persisted, however, there were important changes in cultural attitudes during this period, both among intellectual and artistic elites and in the population at large. The lifestyles of French citizens continued to vary greatly depending on their social class, but some social trends were common to the whole population. The period from 1870 to 1914 saw a gradual improvement in health conditions and life expectancy, particularly due to a decline in infant mortality and childbirth deaths. French doctor Louis Pasteur's demonstration of the role of bacteria in spreading disease became the basis for measures to improve sanitation and limit the spread of many infectious diseases. The bourgeois model of family life gradually spread to other classes, as did the practice of birth control. Common in some regions before 1880, it became increasingly a national habit, although there were still important class differences, with workers tending to have larger families and bourgeois, office employees, and peasants limiting theirs more strongly. Societal norms, strongly expressed in legislation and school textbooks, dictated that men were supposed to provide for and control their households. Women were to be submissive and devote themselves to domestic tasks. If they sought employment, it should be only to supplement the main breadwinner's income, and work was supposed to be only a temporary stage in a woman's life—one she would willingly abandon to raise her children. Few peasant or worker families, of course, could afford to follow this pattern; the percentage of women in the workforce actually rose after 1870.

Women in French Society

Although the basic pattern of gender hierarchy created by Napoleon's Civil Code and the Republic's exclusion of women from political citizenship remained in place, late

nineteenth-century legislation gave women somewhat greater rights. After the 1884 divorce law, in 1886 they gained the ability to open bank accounts without their husbands' consent. In 1893, single adult women were granted full legal rights, and in 1897, women obtained the right to testify in legal trials. It was during this period that women first began to enter the educated professions, although only in minuscule numbers. The first French woman to earn a medical degree graduated in 1875, and in 1885 the first women doctors were permitted to work in French hospitals. By 1903, there were still fewer than 100 female doctors in the country, but by 1913 women represented 10 percent of the medical students in French universities. Jeanne Chauvin became the first woman to earn a law degree in 1892, although it took eight years and the support of leading politicians before she was admitted to practice in 1900. The Ferry school laws, which set up a system of secular secondary schools for girls, created a new profession for educated women as teachers. The graduates of the *Ecole normale de Sèvres*, provided a new model for female careers.

While some new possibilities opened for women in the years around 1900, they continued to be denied any direct role in politics. Organized feminist groups driven underground during the Second Empire and the period of the "Moral Order" government, resurfaced in 1878, when Maria Deraimes and Léon Richer established the Society to Improve the Condition of Women and Claim Their Rights, and the French League for Women's Rights. Both groups favored gradual reforms, such as the legalization of divorce and improvements in women's property rights, but they avoided the controversial issue of women's suffrage. Another feminist, the combative Hubertine Auclert, made herself the leading French advocate of voting rights for women. She asked why women should be obliged to pay taxes to a government in which they were not represented. At the 1879 workers' congress that led to the creation of France's first socialist party, Auclert successfully challenged the leaders of the new movement to adopt a feminist program. Despite their inclusion of women's rights in their agenda, however, the socialist movements paid little attention to feminist issues, and women were relegated to a minor role in the parties of the 1890s. Some leftwing groups, particularly those influenced by Proudhon, were opposed to an independent social role for women. Jules Guesde, consistent with his reading of Marx's teachings, argued that women's issues were peripheral to the central question of liberating the working class from capitalist exploitation.

On the conservative side, the Catholic church continued to command many women's loyalties, but its teachings did not suggest any reconsideration of women's traditional roles. Within the church framework, laywomen were often active in charitable organizations, particularly those that emphasized the maintenance of established social hierarchies. The church also offered women who joined religious orders an alternative to married life. In 1878, nuns outnumbered male clergy, making up 58 percent of the church's personnel. Most of them were teachers in Catholic girls' schools or nurses. The strong association between women and the church was one reason many republicans and socialists—even outspokenly republican women such as Clémence Royer, who translated Charles Darwin's works on evolution into French—opposed political rights for women. They feared female citizens would support conservatism.

The French feminist movement was primarily a bourgeois affair, in which the problems of working women were treated as secondary. Deraimes's and Richer's groups helped organize a widely publicized international congress on women's issues, held in conjunction with the Paris world's fair of 1889. In 1891, another bourgeois

feminist, Eugénie Potonie-Pierre, organized the Women's Solidarity Group to address the problems of working women, with an eye to keeping them from turning to leftwing ideas. The 1890s was marked by extensive debate about the phenomenon of the "new woman," a label applied to women who, without organizing themselves into a formal movement, insisted on their right to play independent roles in public affairs. The flamboyant journalist Marguerite Durand gathered a group of these women to help her publish *La Fronde*, a newspaper written, edited, and printed exclusively by women that she established in 1897. Active in the arts and in public controversies such as the Dreyfus Affair, Durand and her friends challenged the conventional limits on women's activities. Among the most controversial of the group was Nelly Roussel, a campaigner on behalf of women's access to birth control, a particularly sensitive issue since it involved sex education and ran counter to the pervasive insistence that national security required a higher birth rate. Bourgeois feminists thus succeeded in bringing "the woman question" into the public eye, but they were unable to overcome the gap between middle-class and working-class concerns. Their repeated refusal to endorse proposals for a mandatory day off for domestic servants showed how deep this cleavage was.

The Beginnings of the French Welfare State

During the early decades of the Third Republic, legislators passed several laws that expanded the government's role in promoting the personal well-being of many groups of its citizens. Such legislation departed from the traditional liberal premise that the functions of government should be as limited as possible and pointed toward the development of what would later be known as a "welfare state," in which national governments took responsibility for seeing that all citizens enjoyed adequate health care, living standards, and protection against such risks as unemployment and disability. Traditionally, France was considered to have lagged behind the other major European countries in enacting welfare legislation, particularly because it was so slow in providing unemployment insurance. (National legislation for this purpose was not adopted until 1958.) Recent research has changed this picture considerably and shown that the Third Republic was a pioneer in many areas of welfare policy, especially with regard to protection of women and children.

The fact that France was often in the lead in its concern for the welfare of women and children was due less to women's groups than to the efforts of middle-class male reformers. Many of them were motivated by fear that France's national future was in danger because of its unusually low birth rate and its high rate of infant mortality. The military defeat of 1870 drew attention to the fact that Germany's population was growing faster than France's. The Roussel law of 1874 regulating wet-nursing, a practice condemned as exposing infants to unnecessary health hazards, was one of the first responses to this perceived problem. Since the revolutionary era, French law had prevented women from bringing paternity suits to obtain child support, but court decisions in this period began to establish the principle that men did have obligations to their illegitimate children. An 1889 law asserted the state's right to intervene in families to prevent child abuse, and after 1893, the state offered expectant mothers free medical care. Another law passed in 1904 authorized welfare assistance to children of poor families.

Although republican ideology taught that women should remain at home to raise their children, French legislators did recognize that most poor women had to work. Many of them therefore supported activist Pauline Kergomard's campaign for public kindergartens or day-care centers, known in French as *écoles maternelles*, which were incorporated into public elementary schools in 1886. Ostensibly to protect families and children, legislators also passed laws in 1892 and 1900 limiting women's working hours. In her autobiography, the seamstress Jeanne Bouvier recalled that, before the 1892 law, her employer forced employees to work "until two in the morning nearly every day, and without our having eaten, except for a small loaf of bread and a bit of chocolate at four o'clock."¹ Employers often found a way around the new rules, however, by paying women to do piecework in their own homes.

By the early twentieth century, the principle that the state had a right and even a responsibility to intervene in citizens' private lives, particularly those of women and children, in order to assure a minimum of social protection had been established. One unintended consequence of the Third Republic's welfare legislation was the creation of government jobs for women as inspectors, to see that the newly enacted policies were being carried out. A few women had been employed in such roles as early as the 1830s, to supervise nursery schools and women's prisons, but the Third Republic's legislation brought the creation of new positions concerned with women's workplaces and the implementation of social-assistance programs. Although the total number of these positions remained limited, they set an important precedent for the involvement of women in the public sphere. In increasing numbers, women were also starting to move into jobs in the service sector of the economy—selling goods in the department stores that flourished in the last decades of the century and working as office clerks and typists.

Naturalism, Impressionism, and the Avant-Garde

The consolidation of the Republic, a regime based on secular values, provided the opportunity for new cultural developments. In literature, the realism of Balzac and Flaubert evolved into the more explicit naturalism of Emile Zola and Guy de Maupassant. Zola's essay *The Experimental Novel* (1880) was the manifesto for the new literary movement. The fiction writer, Zola proclaimed, should see himself as contributing to the scientific study of man and society: "Scientific investigation, experimental reasoning, challenge one by one the hypotheses of the idealists and replace the novel of pure imagination by novels of observation and experiment."²

Zola applied his ideas in a series of novels meant to portray the French society of the late nineteenth century. For his depiction of the new department stores that had become such a major feature of French life, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, he did extensive research on the operations of enterprises like the Parisian *Bon Marché*. His novel of working-class protest, *Germinal*, was inspired by newspaper reports about miners' strikes in the 1880s. The controversy that surrounded his work stemmed from his direct portrayal of aspects of life that were excluded from conventional bourgeois culture: poverty, class conflict, and sexuality. Influenced by biological research on the importance of heredity, Zola's stories had a fatalistic theme. The calamities that befell his protagonists were described as the inevitable consequence of their ancestry, and the society he portrayed seemed to be in the grip of large forces beyond human control.

Zola was linked to the increasingly prominent group of Impressionist painters by friendship and by a common aspiration to portray the world as it actually appeared. But the colorful canvases of Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne, and their friends—now among the world's most popular artworks—shocked and offended art connoisseurs of the period as much as Zola's novels, with their emphasis on sex and suffering. The label "Impressionist" was originally a critical one, derived from the title of one of the works Claude Monet exhibited at a group show in 1874. It was meant to deride these artists' tendency to paint the impressions of what they saw, rather than giving their subjects a timeless and monumental quality. Zola defended his friends' works and gave the term a positive connotation. He argued that their efforts to capture "the impression of a moment experienced in nature" made them "the true representatives of our time."³

In their efforts to give a realistic rendering of what they saw, the Impressionist painters abandoned traditional artistic rules about composition and style. Influenced by new scientific theories about the nature of vision, they painted using small touches of color, rather than mixing their tones on their palette. The Impressionists often worked in the open air, rather than laboring over their canvases in their studios. The subjects they chose—farm fields, unspectacular landscapes in the vicinity of Paris, scenes of daily life in the city's streets—lacked the grandeur and obvious significance of traditional artists' subjects. Their willingness to adopt ideas from other artistic traditions, particularly the Japanese, threw into question traditional assumptions about the inherent superiority of Western art. In all these respects, the Impressionists anticipated innovations that have come to be characteristic of modern art.

By the 1890s, Impressionism was gaining a certain acceptance and some younger artists were proclaiming themselves as a new "avant-garde" bent on making even more radical experiments. Paul Cézanne, an older artist of the Impressionists' generation, had long been making paintings in which the objects portrayed seemed to dissolve into the simple geometric forms that underlay them. His work pointed toward Cubism and the abstract, nonrepresentational art of the twentieth century, which came to see him as one of the greatest innovators in the history of painting. Georges Seurat carried to an extreme the Impressionist technique of using small dots of pure color, composing large canvases made up entirely of little flecks. This "pointillist" technique gave his works, such as *Sunday in the Park of the Grande Jatte*, a haunting and enigmatic quality. The Dutch expatriate Vincent Van Gogh, who lived and worked in France in the last frenzied, creative years of his life, used bright colors and emphatic brushstrokes to communicate a furious emotional intensity in his works. The contrast between the quiet serenity of Monet's landscapes and the violent tension suggested in the works of Van Gogh shows how strongly the new atmosphere of the *fin-de-siècle* differed from what preceded it. Van Gogh for a short time worked together with Paul Gauguin, who shared his interest in color. Gauguin became best known for his paintings of life in Tahiti, the French island colony in the Pacific, which contrasted the beauty and sexual freedom of a primitive people to the repressed civilization of Europe.

France's official art establishment certainly did not provide innovators with much encouragement. Government officials patronized conventional painters who decorated public buildings with canvases repeating the tired clichés of neoclassicism or uninspired history scenes.. In the 1890s, conservative republicans supported an arts-and-crafts revival that looked to the delicate craftsmanship of the age of Louis XV for inspiration.

Nevertheless, some aspects of French life did provide the basis for the flourishing avant-garde. Particularly in Paris, the network of galleries and dealers was extensive enough so that even the most radical innovators could find some financial backing. The concentration of so many artists in one place favored the spread of new ideas. If French society did not exactly embrace artistic experimentation, its respect for individual liberty at least gave it the opportunity to develop. In places like the Parisian neighborhood of Montmartre, artists, poets, and young people eager to flout social conventions clustered in such numbers that they constituted a veritable countersociety, a “Bohemia” in which new ideas could take root. By the end of the century, indeed, the existence of such an artistic milieu was a venerable tradition. The rebellious artist or poet was a long-established social type. “Bohemia” provided a tacitly tolerated escape from the restrictions of conventional society. Only occasionally—as when the young playwright Alfred Jarry had the actors in his play *Ubu Roi* open the show with the word *merdre* (shit) in 1896—did the denizens of Bohemia provoke their more conventional neighbors into a violent response.

Mass Culture

While cultural elites debated the experiments of the Impressionists, mass culture catered to the less-educated members of the population. Female readers devoured the “domestic novels” of writers like Josephine de Gaulle—grandmother of the future national hero—with their repetitive plots in which true love and devotion enabled female protagonists to bring order to homes and families menaced by chaos. The novels of Jules Verne, which mixed romantic plots with an emphasis on the possibilities of new scientific technology—submarines and space voyages—attracted young readers and promoted the development of a new literary genre, science fiction.

The culture of consumption that had begun to develop in the first half of the nineteenth century reached widening circles of the population. It was propagated above all by the development of the department store, a new form of retailing that had appeared in France during the years of the Second Empire. Bringing together under a single roof a wide range of clothing and articles for the home, offered at set prices rather than being sold through a process of individualized bargaining, enterprises like *Bon Marché* and *Galeries Lafayette* democratized fashion and spread the habit of material acquisition to the growing middle class. By permitting customers after 1872 to make purchases on an installment plan, the owners of the *Samaritaine* department store opened up an even greater market for themselves. The democratization of consumer goods made possible by the department store developed in parallel with the political democratization of the period.

Especially in Paris, along the boulevards created by Haussmann’s remodeling of the city, a new kind of urban culture grew up, accessible even to those of modest means. The number of cafés grew rapidly from the 1880s onward, and some expanded to make themselves into dance halls, like the famous *Moulin Rouge* in the Montmartre neighborhood, or venues for music performances, like the *Bataclan* which would become the site of a horrific terrorist attack in 2015. Leading artists such as Toulouse-Lautrec found inspiration for their work in these establishments and also designed advertising posters for these spectacles, which, together with commercial posters for many other products, covered city walls. After the turn of the century, a new form of popular entertainment, the moving picture, spread

rapidly. The first French films, particularly those produced by the Lumière brothers, French inventors from Lyon, documented scenes from everyday life, but another early French filmmaker, Georges Méliès, soon showed that the new art form could be used to appeal to viewers' imaginations with romantic, heroic, and fantastic stories. By 1907, there were 10,000 movie theaters in France, and entrepreneurs like Charles Pathé and Léo Gaumont had created distribution companies that still dominate the market in France today.

The Republic's World's Fairs

The cultural aspirations of the Third Republic were most spectacularly expressed in the great world's fairs the regime sponsored in 1878, 1889, and 1900. The British had mounted the first great international exposition in 1851, but France, with its tradition of cultural universalism, became the most enthusiastic promoter of such events. Napoleon III's government had sponsored expositions in 1855 and 1867, broadening them from the British model of a display of technological achievements to include displays of art and exhibits devoted to social progress. The leaders of the Third Republic saw expositions as ways of demonstrating that, despite the defeat of 1870, France was more than ever at the forefront of progress and the center of world affairs. The 1878 fair had a special political point. Opened just after the end of the crisis caused by Marshal MacMahon's "coup" in 1877, it was a chance for visitors from all over the world to see that the republicans were firmly in control of the country. To emphasize France's world role, the Third Republic's expositions were used as occasions for the convening of important international congresses to discuss a wide variety of issues. Meetings held in conjunction with the 1878 world's fair included an International Congress on the Rights of Women, an international peace congress, and a meeting of mountain climbers. Victor Hugo chaired a conference on intellectual property rights that produced the first international copyright agreement, and another conference led to the creation of the Universal Postal Union, establishing global rules for the exchange of mail.

The 1889 world's fair, held to mark the centennial of the French Revolution, was even more successful than that of 1878. Thirty-two million people came, twice as many as in 1878. A major function of the fair was to showcase the achievements of modern technology. French engineer Gustave Eiffel's 300 meter-high steel tower, nearly twice as tall as any previous building, was the exposition's centerpiece. Denounced by critics, including most of France's leading artists and writers, as a "gigantic and hideous skeleton," it was initially supposed to be taken down after 20 years; instead, it has become the internationally recognized symbol of the French capital. Equally spectacular for fair visitors was the *Galerie des machines*, an iron-frame building whose girders supported a roof covering a span of 377 feet, providing space for displays of the ever larger and more powerful machines that were the most visible symbols of modern man's conquest of nature. The fair was also an opportunity to publicize France's rapidly growing empire. The *Palais central des colonies* jumbled together reproductions of Algerian mosques, Cambodian temples, and other unfamiliar architectural styles. Indoors, colonial "natives" performed in settings designed to emphasize the backwardness and strangeness of their cultures relative to France. Only one exceptional journalist reminded readers that "these are people and not exotic animals that we are watching behind the fences."⁴

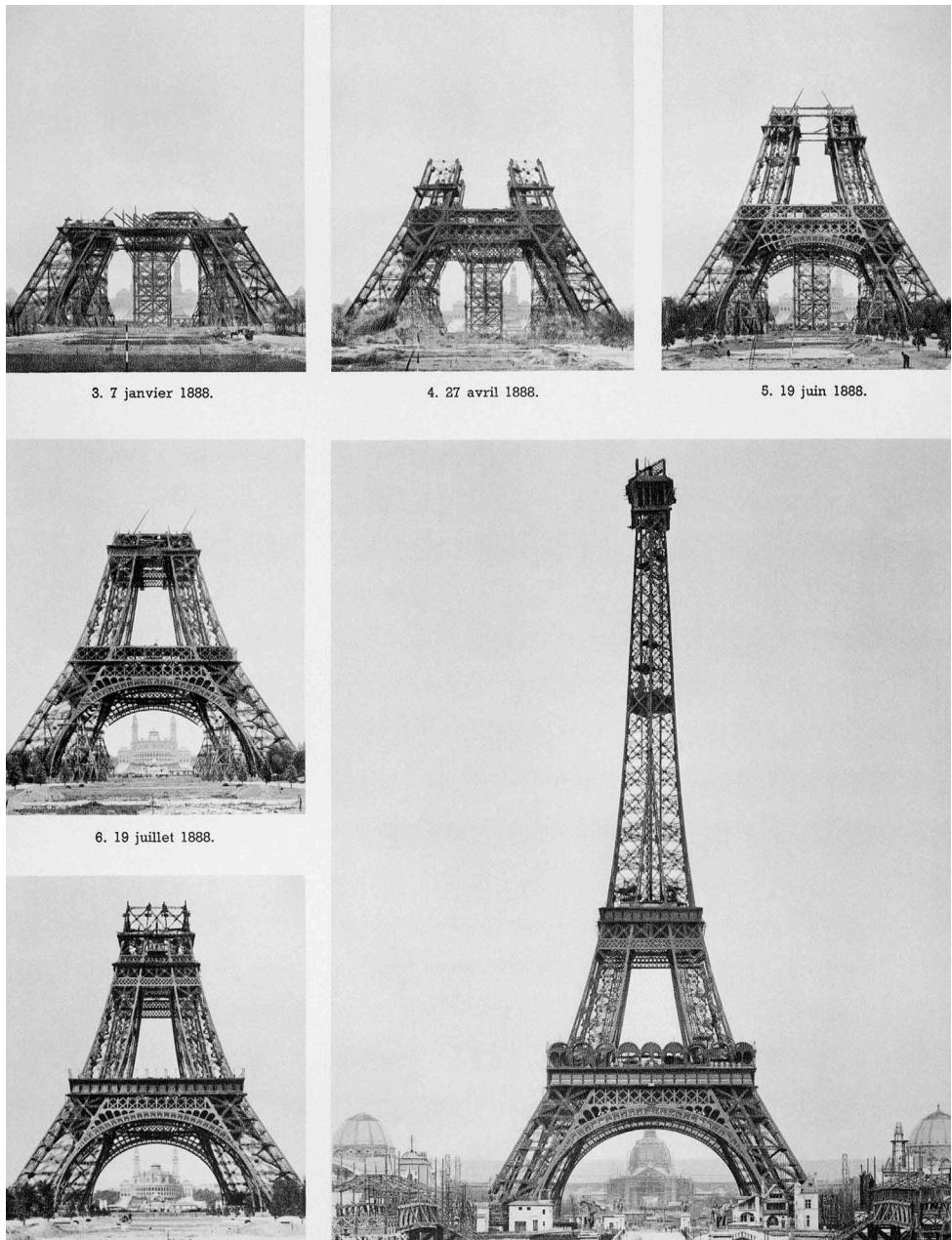


Figure 20.1 The Construction of the Eiffel Tower

When it was constructed for the Paris World's Fair of 1889, the Eiffel Tower was the tallest building in the world. Denounced for its ugliness by critics used to conventional architecture, its use of materials created by new technology has made it a symbol of modernity as well as a universally recognized icon for Paris and France. (© Bettmann/Getty Images)

An Age of Anxiety

Socialist and trade-union movements, feminist groups, and conservative Catholics all challenged—in one way or another—the liberal, individualistic assumptions on which the Third Republic was based. By the last decade of the century, those assumptions were also coming under increasing intellectual challenge. The faith in the inevitability of progress, particularly scientific progress, so characteristic of the founders of the Third Republic no longer prevailed. Instead, artists and writers reflected a broader fear that French society, and perhaps the Western world generally, had entered a period of decadence in which all values seemed increasingly uncertain. France's defeat by Germany in 1870, even though it was by now several decades in the past, continued to haunt the country as a sign of decline. The victory of the United States over France's Latin neighbor Spain in the Spanish-American War of 1898 triggered a wave of books warning that all of European civilization was now threatened by the rise of foreign “barbarians.”

Wherever they looked, observers of the French social scene in the 1890s claimed to find signs of moral and cultural degeneration. “Populationists” such as Jacques Bertillon lamented France's failure to match the birth rates in rival countries (particularly Germany) as a sign of declining national virility. The country was gripped by a veritable panic about the danger of venereal disease, whose spread appeared to many to threaten the very survival of the French “race.” The influx of foreign immigrants was also blamed for diluting French racial qualities. Doctors concurred that they were seeing increased numbers of patients with nervous ailments or “neurasthenia,” a condition they diagnosed as a reaction of sensitive souls to the strains of modern urban life. This condition seemed to afflict primarily the wealthier classes, but the health of the poor seemed to be degenerating as well. One concern was the rising per capita consumption of alcohol, which doubled between the 1830s and the turn of the century thanks to the increasing availability of cheap, mass-manufactured beverages.

Was life really more difficult for most French men and women at the turn of the twentieth century than it had been 50 or 100 years earlier? Objective indices show that the population was generally eating somewhat better, living in slightly improved housing, and enjoying a wider range of leisure activities. French historian Alain Corbin notes a growing sense of individual identity, particularly among the bourgeois classes. The spread of photography allowed ordinary people to preserve the record of their individual appearance, while changes in domestic architecture gave more family members private rooms and individual beds. The vogue for tourism, already in evidence during the Second Empire but greatly expanded in the last decades of the century, showed an increased thirst for individual experiences beyond the routine of work and everyday life. Thanks to the railroads, even relatively modest middle-class families could now afford short trips to the beach or the mountains. The bicycle, popularized after 1890, provided a popular means of escape from a confining environment, as well as giving women justification for abandoning cumbersome corsets. Corbin even produces evidence to argue that both men and women were seeking and obtaining greater sexual pleasure by the end of the century.

These changes were not what impressed most observers at the time, however. To many writers and thinkers of the period, the visible social ills of the time were evidence that trends that had made France an increasingly rationalized, urban

society had changed life for the worse. Maurice Barrès, one of the most influential of the new writers to come to prominence in the 1890s, was one of those who castigated the destructive influence of human reason on the healthy energies of the instincts, and deplored the uprooting of the rural population. He denounced the corruption of France's vigorous national instincts by philosophical skepticism—propagated, he claimed, by the Third Republic's secular school system. A more extreme vision of the decadence of modern society appeared in the novels of J. K. Huysmans, such as *A Rebours* and *Là-Bas*. Like Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud—the Symbolist poets whose work Huysmans helped publicize and who achieved prominence at the end of the century—Huysmans drew inspiration from the earlier work of Baudelaire. But the new literature of the *fin-de-siècle* went beyond its forebears in the depth of its search for a reality beyond that of outward appearances. Jean Moréas's "Symbolist Manifesto," published in 1886, asserted that intuition, rather than reason, was the artist's surest path to reality. But that reality could only be expressed indirectly, through symbols, a recipe for a difficult, allusive art that could only be understood by a small elite. In music, the same tendencies were evident in the cult of the composer Richard Wagner who, despite his association with German nationalism, dazzled the Paris avant-garde with his evocation of a humanity in thrall to dark and mysterious forces. Turn-of-the-century French composers such as Claude Debussy also tried to convey some of the Symbolist message in their works, but they reacted against Wagner's influence by writing for smaller ensembles and using less elaborate orchestration.

Literature, art, and music were not the only domains in which an increased interest in irrational forces could be detected during the 1890s. The sociologist Gustave Le Bon, whose *Crowd Psychology* became a best seller, gave a gloomy analysis of the characteristics of modern mass society. The masses, he maintained, were fundamentally incapable of rational action, and were easily swayed by appeals to their lower instincts. His pessimistic ideas exercised a certain influence on many of the period's thinkers, including Sigmund Freud. The greatest French social scientist of the period, Emile Durkheim, was considerably more subtle than Le Bon, and did not share the former's political conservatism. But his work, too, pointed in the direction of minimizing the importance of the individual and rationalism in the understanding of social phenomena. Durkheim's analysis of religion as a social construct was not a return to traditional patterns of faith—he saw religious beliefs as essentially human in origin—but it cast doubt on the notion of society as a construct of autonomous individuals. Instead, society appeared an organic unity, imposing beliefs on the individuals who composed it. Durkheim's celebrated monograph on suicide, in addition to being an early model of the application of statistical methods to the study of social problems, also suggested the powerlessness of the individual in the face of society. His conclusion was that suicide was a result of *anomie*, or the experience of being isolated and not having connections with the community around one. In both his methods and his conclusions, Durkheim was one of the founders of modern sociology. Personally, he was a loyal supporter of republican values, but the implications of his work undermined the faith in individual judgment that lay at the basis of the Third Republic's institutions.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Mark Traugott, ed., *The French Worker: Autobiographies from the Early Industrial Era* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 372.
- 2 Zola, “The Experimental Novel,” in Eugen Weber, ed., *Paths to the Present* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 171.
- 3 Ibid., 186–87.
- 4 Cited in Lynn E. Palermo, “Identity under Construction: Representing the Colonies at the Paris *Exposition Universelle* of 1889,” in Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds., *The Color of Race: Histories of Race in France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 291.

21 The *Belle Époque*

Decades after the calamities that followed the outbreak of war in 1914, the French started to refer to the years from 1905 until that date as the *belle époque*, the “good era,” a period of peace and prosperity sharply interrupted by the disaster of war. It is true that these years were a time of increasing economic prosperity and technological progress, but they were also marked by social conflicts and growing concern about international tensions. The retrospective glow that colors this period comes above all from the contrast with the dark times that followed it.

The Second Industrial Revolution in France

By the first decade of the twentieth century, France was experiencing the impact of a series of new technological developments often labeled the “second industrial revolution.” The first industrial revolution, which had affected France starting around 1830, had involved chiefly the exploitation of steam power, the mechanization of textile production, and the introduction of the railroad. The second revolution was characterized by the development of new industries that exploited the scientific advances of the nineteenth century, particularly in the areas of electricity and chemistry, and new inventions such as the internal combustion engine, which made automobiles and airplanes possible. The Paris International Exposition of 1900 emphasized the wonders of electric lighting, and the need to transport the thousands of visitors whom it brought to the city led to the construction of the first lines of the Paris subway, the *Métro*, which used electricity to power its trains. Electricity and advances in chemistry were both essential for the development of the film and the projectors that made motion pictures possible. France was an early leader in this industry, which owed much to the contributions of the Lumière brothers, manufacturers of photographic film, who were based in Lyon.

French manufacturers were also successful in several other new industries. In 1913, France was second only to the United States in the manufacture of automobiles, another product made possible by innovations associated with the second industrial revolution. In this case, the innovation was development of compact, lightweight internal combustion engines, starting in the 1880s. French firms such as Renault, which grew from making six cars a year in 1898 to producing 4,481 in 1913, were renowned for the high technological level of their products. French interest in automobiles was furthered by the Michelin tire company, whose familiar symbol, “Bibendum,” a figure constructed out of rubber tires, was invented in 1898. By publishing guides listing hotels, garages, and tourist attractions, Michelin encouraged motoring;

images in its advertising suggested that this was an activity through which successful men—women were never shown behind the wheel of a car—could assert their social status.

The French success in several important sectors of the modern economy demonstrates that the country was not inherently unable to compete in the new economic environment at the turn of the century. But it is easy to exaggerate the degree of French economic modernization in this period. French industrial development was very uneven. Despite being at the forefront in filmmaking and automobile manufacturing, France lagged far behind other industrial nations in the adoption of other new technologies of the period, such as the telephone. And, unlike the American Henry Ford, the French auto manufacturers did not adopt mass production methods to bring down the prices of their products and create a larger market for them. French peasant farmers clung to their small properties and their preindustrial practices and, as a result, they failed to provide a dynamic domestic market for the country's manufacturers. New, productive industries were also highly concentrated in a few favored regions—notably in Paris (whose share of the total national population continued to grow), in the steel-making region of Lorraine, and around Lyon and Grenoble.



Figure 21.1 A Jewish Butcher's Shop in Paris around 1932

The Hebrew letters in this shop sign in Paris's Marais neighborhood reflect the impact of Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe. The neighborhood remains a center of Jewish life today. It is the home of several synagogues and the Musée d'art et d'histoire juive, a major tourist attraction. (Photo by Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images)

Economic expansion brought with it mixed consequences for the different groups in the French population. As businessmen saw new opportunities for expansion, the industrial workforce, which had stagnated since the late 1870s, grew rapidly. It expanded by more than 1,300,000 from 1896 to 1911 even though population growth remained very slow. The increase came mainly from more extensive employment of women and from immigration. Women made up more than half the workforce in the textile industry and in several other major trades, such as tobacco working. Often employed at home or in crowded sweatshops in urban areas, they were invariably paid less than men. The growing number of women in the industrial workforce inspired a major national debate. Middle-class reformers expressed dismay about a phenomenon that they blamed for taking women out of their proper sphere in the home and lowering the national birth rate. Male workers, particularly those in the more highly paid skilled trades that had traditionally barred women, also supported limitations on women's work, fearing their employment would lead to lower wages.

Foreign Immigration

The influx of foreign workers also caused debate and conflict. The French experience was part of a worldwide pattern in which members of poverty-stricken populations in Europe's less industrialized regions flowed to areas of economic growth. Just as poor Italians and East European Jews moved to the United States during this period, they also poured into France—along with Belgian migrants who settled primarily in the northern departments near their home country and Spaniards who concentrated in the *Midi*. The Italian workers, most numerous in the southeast, were often brought in to do poorly paid, exhausting manual labor that French workers were reluctant to perform. They encountered considerable prejudice and were sometimes targets of ethnic violence. French workers blamed them for undercutting wages, but the Italians often joined radical organizations and resisted employers' demands more vehemently than their French colleagues. The Jewish immigrants settled primarily in the poor neighborhoods of Paris and worked in artisan trades, such as textiles. Their presence changed the nature of France's Jewish community. The new arrivals were considerably poorer and less assimilated than the long-established French-Jewish population. The fourth *arrondissement* neighborhood where these Jewish immigrants concentrated, the "Pletzl," has now become a major Paris tourist attraction. Immigrants played an essential role in making economic growth possible, but the hostile reaction to their presence was the first sign of a pattern of nativist reaction that has reappeared as successive immigrant groups have settled in France.

For the working class in general, economic growth had paradoxical results. Workers' living conditions, which had remained stable or even improved slightly in the 1880s and 1890s because of falling prices, did not always rise in the years of expansion. The cost of living went up faster than wages from 1902 onward. After nearly a century of general price stability, France began to experience the steady inflation which—accelerated enormously by the First World War—characterized its economy until the 1980s. The Third Republic's legislators were not, as is sometimes alleged, completely indifferent to workers' problems. But the legislation they passed—an initial law on factory sanitation in 1894, a broader law on workplace safety in 1898, a law limiting working hours to ten hours a day in 1900, and an old-age pension law in 1910—came slowly. These laws were often passed years after comparable legislation in Britain and

Germany, and enforcement was often inadequate. Meanwhile, the period's economic expansion certainly benefited the middle classes, and even more so the wealthy. Industrial profits rose sharply, and the very rich appropriated the largest share of this new wealth. In the short run, rather than easing social tensions, the economic growth at the beginning of the century set the stage for sharper confrontations.

The Years of Protests

Disputes about how the growing French economic pie should be divided intensified for much of this period. Socialist militants, workers, and even a substantial fraction of the peasantry were now ready to take direct action to obtain their aims. On the other hand, the bourgeois supporters of the Radical Party were now prepared to back a government that would firmly defend order and property, just as the more conservative Progressist republicans had in the early 1890s. As so often in French history, however, the dramatic gestures and rhetoric of the period did not tell the whole story. There were also some constructive compromises between rival social and political movements. At the moment when war broke out in 1914, it was as easy to argue that France was poised on the brink of significant social reform as it was to predict even greater social conflict.

The breakup of the Republican Defense coalition and the beginning of the new political period were precipitated by the end of collaboration between Jaurès's socialists and the government. This was a result of increasing frustration in the socialist rank and file with the results of Jaurès's reformist policy. The 1904 congress of the international socialist movement voted to condemn socialists who supported "bourgeois" governments, thus rejecting both Millerand and Jaurès. It sternly urged the French socialists, divided into a Jaurèsian reformist party and Guesde's "revolutionary" group, to unify themselves.

Rather than find himself outside the socialist movement, Jaurès bowed to these demands. He was then able to achieve another of the goals he had long sought. In April 1905, the long-divided French socialists for the first time created a unified party, the SFIO (*Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière*, or French Section of the Workingmen's International), commonly known as the Socialist party. Its program, promising "fundamental and unyielding opposition to the whole of the bourgeois class and to the State which is its instrument,"¹ was Guesdist in tone. But Jaurès was its principal leader and the party reflected his tendency to combine socialism and republican democracy. The party's increasingly diverse electoral base, which included not only industrial workers but also civil servants and schoolteachers who had a vested interest in the existing system, and peasants who were concerned with maintaining their small properties, ruled out a real revolutionary attitude. Internally, the SFIO had also adopted the procedures of parliamentary democracy. It accustomed its members to settling disputes through open debate and the casting of ballots. Increasingly, the revolutionary rhetoric of socialist manifestos was at odds with the party's reformist practices, a contradiction that would characterize French socialism throughout much of the twentieth century.

That the formation of the SFIO would in the end lead to a shift in the direction of reformism was certainly not clear in the middle years of the new century's first decade, however. From 1904 on, the number of strikes mounted every year. Employers and the government met these movements with increasing severity, and often the result was

violence. The strike wave brought hundreds of new members into the Confédération Générale de Travail (CGT), the national trade union federation founded in 1895. The CGT's call for a national general strike to demand an eight-hour working day on May 1, 1906 raised tension in the country to a peak. Union militants hoped, and timid bourgeois feared, that the protest would turn into the revolutionary general strike that syndicalists had long preached. In the end, it resulted in large demonstrations and scattered violence but no insurrection. In retrospect, its long-term impact was to strengthen the reformist tendencies within the union movement, parallel to those in the SFIO. Like that party, the union movement attracted growing numbers of members from groups who, in practice, had little to gain from revolutionary disruption. Unions representing groups such as postal workers, teachers, and employees in state-regulated industries such as the railroads became large components of the CGT by 1910. Although they occasionally staged significant strikes, they wanted to generate political pressure on the government to grant their demands, rather than to destroy the capitalist economic system.

Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Action Française

One reaction against the CGT's drift toward reformism after the strike wave of 1904 to 1906 was the development of a new doctrine of revolutionary syndicalism. The leading figures in this movement were labor militants such as Gustave Hervé, who had been repeatedly jailed for his agitational activities. The idea of the general strike as a myth that could galvanize the working class was articulated most forcefully by the renegade anarchist Georges Sorel in *On Violence*, published in 1908. But his formulation had little direct impact on the labor movement. From the failure of the period's strikes, the revolutionary syndicalists concluded that the mass of the workers could never be mobilized against the existing social system through conventional forms of propaganda. Only a dedicated revolutionary minority, acting on its own, could provide the spark for a genuine social revolution.

Emerging on the extreme left of the French political spectrum, these antidemocratic and antirationalist ideas had a certain affinity with the outlook of the most extreme rightwing movements of the period, of which the most important was the *Action française*. Founded at the time of the Dreyfus affair to publish a conservative magazine, the group soon came under the leadership of a powerful ideologue, Charles Maurras, whose ideas guided it until its demise after the Second World War. Maurras preached a thoroughgoing rejection of republicanism and democracy. In their place, he called for a return to monarchy, not out of a traditionalist devotion to the French past, but because only an authoritarian leader could make France strong again. On this basis, Maurras constructed a cohesive nationalist doctrine, calling for the exclusion of foreigners, or *métèques* (he considered Jews the most dangerous), from the country, the abolition of democratic institutions, and the total subordination of individual rights to national considerations.

Aware that his ideas could never command majority support, Maurras advocated violent means of agitation through which an activist minority could impose itself. These anti-democratic tactics, derived from those of the anti-Dreyfusard leagues of the 1890s, foreshadowed the methods of the Italian Fascists and Hitler's Nazi party in Germany later in the twentieth century. In 1908 the *Action française* created groups of armed toughs, the *Camelots du Roi*, who not only distributed its propaganda but also fought street battles

against its opponents. The *Action française* exercised a particular appeal to students and intellectuals, who often saw in it the only ideologically coherent alternative to leftwing radicalism. In the years before the war of 1914, *Action française* activists drove several Jewish professors from their classrooms at the Sorbonne and created a highly polarized atmosphere in the Parisian intellectual world. Often tolerated or covertly supported by more conventional conservatives who criticized its methods but not its choice of targets, the movement kept the violent, anti-Semitic spirit of the anti-Dreyfus campaign alive.

Peasant Protests

The largest and most violent protest movement of these troubled years arose not among the urban working class, but in the wine-growing region of Lower Languedoc. After the *phylloxera* epidemic, this part of southern France had become a massive, industrial-style wine production center, turning out a cheap, low-quality product for everyday consumption. Workers on the large grape plantations and the small independent growers who were still numerous shared a common interest in the price of their product. But overproduction and increased foreign competition caused an acute crisis after 1903. A charismatic café owner named Marcellin Albert (hailed as “the Redeemer” by his followers) and the socialist mayor of Narbonne, Ferroul, organized a protest movement whose rallies gathered as many as 500,000 supporters at their peak in the spring of 1907. Albert flirted with revolutionary rhetoric, urging his supporters to withhold taxes to obtain their demands. At moments, it seemed as if the government’s authority was crumbling in the face of the winegrowers’ revolt. One army regiment mutinied for fear of being ordered to fire on protesters, citizens of the same region from which the soldiers came. Government firmness, the discrediting of Albert, who visited Prime Minister Clemenceau in Paris and embarrassed his followers by allowing Clemenceau to pay for his return train ticket, and measures that furthered a rise in wine prices after 1907 drained the movement of its militancy. Subsequent French governments down to the present, however, have repeatedly had to deal with militant peasant groups using direct-action tactics like those pioneered by Albert.

Coupled with disturbances caused by implementation of the laws separating church and state, the explosion of protests in the middle years of the twentieth century’s first decade gave the impression that France was once again poised on the brink of a major crisis. The Radical government stood firm, however, and, as it became clear that strikes and demonstrations would not sway it, the social atmosphere gradually calmed down. The politician most closely identified with the tempering of these protests was the veteran Radical leader Georges Clemenceau. His long period in office, from 1906 to 1909, was another example of the Third Republic’s often-underestimated capacity for generating strong leadership in critical situations. At the age of 64, Clemenceau obtained a ministerial post for the first time in early 1906. As minister of the interior, Clemenceau had to deal with numerous strikes sweeping the country’s industrial regions. One was the miners’ strike set off by the horrendous disaster at Courrières in the Nord in March 1906, in which some 1,100 coal miners were killed. Although Clemenceau had a reputation as a man of the left, sympathetic to the problems of the lower classes, he quickly demonstrated that he belonged to the Jacobin tradition of leaders who believed the state’s authority had to be maintained at all costs. He made free use of the police and the army to confront strikers, earning himself the nickname “Top Cop of France” and the lasting hatred of the socialists and trade unionists.

Installed as prime minister later in 1906, Clemenceau promised to continue his policy of containing protests, but also indicated that he would introduce significant reforms inspired by the Radical Party's philosophy of "solidarism" to deal with their root causes. While Clemenceau himself represented an older generation, his cabinet included many of the most promising young politicians of the day. Men such as Aristide Briand and Joseph Caillaux would occupy key positions in subsequent governments. Clemenceau also created a new Ministry of Labor, entrusted to the independent socialist René Viviani, to indicate his determination to deal with workers' problems. Often hamstrung by the conservative sentiments of the Senate, however, Clemenceau failed to carry through major reforms. An example was the progressive income tax bill introduced by his finance minister, Caillaux, and voted by the Chamber of Deputies in 1907, but held up in the Senate until after the outbreak of the First World War.

If he failed to significantly alter the country's social stalemate, Clemenceau did demonstrate that the Third Republic's institutions were still sufficient to deal with labor militancy and social violence. After one particularly bloody clash between strikers and troops at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges in 1908, Clemenceau even had the leaders of the CGT arrested for provoking insurrection. The result of the government's stern attitude, continued by Clemenceau's successor Aristide Briand, who broke a nationwide rail strike in 1910, was to divide militant union leaders still committed to a policy of revolutionary action from the mass of their followers, who came to recognize the futility of violent agitation. Both in the southern wine country and in industrial regions, the social climate calmed considerably in the course of Clemenceau's premiership, which lasted until July 1909.

In the five years after the end of Clemenceau's ministry, the fate of domestic reform movements remained uncertain. The movement for women's suffrage was among those that seemed to be gradually moving toward success during this period. French women's groups, divided along lines of class and religion and smaller in numbers than those in the United States or England, nevertheless succeeded in obtaining increasing support and publicity for women's suffrage. In 1914, around 500,000 women participated in a mail campaign to show support for a bill granting them the right to vote, and the first sizeable public demonstration for the cause was held just days before the outbreak of the First World War. From 1910 to 1914, political leadership alternated between conservative premiers like Aristide Briand and Raymond Poincaré on the one hand, and on the other more reform-minded ministers such as Joseph Caillaux (chief proponent of a progressive income tax) and the independent socialist René Viviani (a strong advocate of women's suffrage, who took office just before the start of the war). Whether the combination of a growing mass movement and sympathetic politicians would have been sufficient to pass a women's suffrage law had the war not intervened is uncertain. But the war crisis disrupted this and a number of other reform efforts.

The Republican Empire

The years from 1870 to 1900 had seen an enormous growth in the size of France's colonial empire. At the end of the Second Empire, France's colonies had occupied about 1 million square kilometers, with a total population of 5 million; by 1900, the figures were 10 million square kilometers and more than 60 million people. France's colonial holdings were second only to those of Britain; they justified France's claim to be a major world power. Through much of the 1890s, the French had still had to struggle

to establish control of their new territories in the face of opposition from the local populations. By 1900, the military stage of conquest was over in most of the colonies, and the French set up civil administrations and began thinking about these regions' futures. As a republican country supposedly dedicated to the universal principles of the French Revolution, France could not simply justify the acquisition of colonies as a matter of seeking wealth or glory. French leaders emphasized the country's *mission civilisatrice*, its duty to bring the benefits of civilization to the non-European populations of its overseas territories. Taken to its logical conclusion, the notion of the *mission civilisatrice* suggested that the ultimate goal of colonial policy should be one of assimilation: the populations of France's colonies should be taught the French language, should learn to live according to French laws, and should have the same rights and privileges as the inhabitants of the metropole. Assimilation implied that the French would accept members of other races as full members of their community—a radical notion compared to the practice of racial segregation that was spreading in the American South during this period or to the policies that the British followed in their overseas possessions.

The promise of assimilation was carried out to some extent in the colonies France had acquired before 1848. These territories lived under French laws and even elected deputies to the Assembly. The vast expansion of France's Empire after 1880 led to increasing doubts about the practicality of assimilation, however. In Algeria, the French had already confronted the problem of a population that resisted giving up its own language and customs, and had concluded that only those individuals who deliberately adapted themselves to French ways of life could really be assimilated. The newly acquired colonies in Africa and southeast Asia posed even more daunting challenges. These possessions attracted very few French settlers: in 1914, the number of Europeans living in the colonies was about 850,000, of whom more than 600,000 were in Algeria.

To deal with their new colonies, French politicians and colonial administrators adopted a new policy known as association. This meant that the French would not seek to impose their own values and customs on colonial populations, but would instead allow them to develop in their own way, while ensuring that their territories would remain connected with France. The leading proponent of such policies was Hubert Lyautey, a French army officer who served in Algeria, Indochina, Madagascar, and most famously as governor of the French protectorate in Morocco from 1912 to 1925. Colonial service attracted Lyautey because it offered him scope for large projects, which were impossible in France. Lyautey took a genuine interest in the cultures of the regions where he was posted, and thought French rule could be best established by winning over their local rulers and elites. His vision of colonialism was in many ways an idealistic one. "Even if France derives nothing from this," he wrote, "we would not have been less the workers for providence on this earth, if we brought back life, cultivation, and humanity to regions given over to brigands and barrenness."² Lyautey never doubted, however, that the introduction of European technology and trade constituted progress, and he had no qualms about imposing French control by military force. In France, Lyautey became a national hero who symbolized the positive side of colonialism, but when Morocco became independent in the 1950s, almost all monuments to him were removed.

Closely associated with the idea of France's *mission civilisatrice* overseas was the idea that the colonies needed to be developed economically, a policy known as *mise en valeur*. At first, the French thought that the building of transportation networks, and above all of

railroads, would accomplish this goal. Energetic administrators such as Paul Doumer in Indochina and Ernest Roume in West Africa planned ambitious rail projects, some of which were still incomplete at the end of the colonial era. These undertakings produced profits for the French companies that provided the necessary equipment, and made the colonies a major outlet for French investment. Experience soon showed, however, that railroads alone were not enough to bring prosperity to the colonies' populations. French administrators complained that the "natives" in their territories did not have proper work habits; it was often necessary to use force to compel them to provide the labor the French wanted for projects such as the creation of rubber plantations in Vietnam. To make their colonial subjects into "useful men" fit for the modern world, the French also thought it necessary to teach them the French language, and to replace traditional local authorities such as Chinese-trained mandarin officials in Vietnam and tribal chiefs in West Africa. At the same time, however, the French worried that giving too many members of their colonial populations a European-style education would produce a discontented class of men with ambitions for higher-level jobs. On the eve of the First World War, the French Empire was still far from fulfilling all the hopes colonial promoters held out for it, but optimism about its future remained strong.

The Onward March of the Avant-Garde

The artists, composers, and poets of the cultural avant-garde had little connection with the larger economic and social changes of the period. They continued to form a small but lively enclave in France's great metropolis, which attracted talented and creative individuals from all over the continent. The explosion of artistic creativity continued unabated in the first years of the new century, moving ever farther away from the classical standards that had shaped Western art since the Renaissance. Henri Matisse and the group of painters some critics dubbed the *Fauves* (the "wild beasts"), including Maurice Vlaminck and André Derain, conducted bold new experiments in the use of color. A few years later, the Spanish-born Pablo Picasso and his French colleague Georges Braque went beyond Cézanne's decomposition of images into geometric forms and created the style known as cubism—a giant step in the direction of modern abstract art. Picasso's cubist experiments were partly inspired by his discovery of African masks and sculptures, which collectors were beginning to bring back from the new French colonies. The growing appreciation of this so-called primitive art raised questions about the superiority of European civilization. The avant-garde artists who were attracted to African art also welcomed as a colleague a French "primitive," the self-taught painter Henri Rousseau and his dreamlike visions of strange beasts in exotic settings. The artistic innovations coming out of Paris attracted a large circle of foreign painters such as the Russians Marc Chagall and Natalia Goncharova, some of whom settled permanently in the country. Like the Impressionists 30 years earlier, the *Fauves* and the Cubists were roundly reviled by critics for destroying artistic traditions and producing "ugly" canvases. Like their predecessors, they relied for support on a small network of sympathetic dealers and collectors—many of them foreigners who came into possession of treasures French museums could only regard enviously when, later in the century, these artists came to be regarded as pathbreaking geniuses.

The avant-garde painters formed part of a larger milieu that included practitioners of many other arts. They were frequently friends of equally innovative composers, such as Erik Satie, whose short compositions parodied "serious" music and made use of sounds

of the industrial world (just as Picasso introduced mass-produced products into some of his collages). Foreign émigrés also contributed to the new trend in music. One example was the Russian Igor Stravinsky, whose daring *Rite of Spring* was the occasion for another of the theater riots that had punctuated the evolution of French culture since the time of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. Much of Stravinsky's work was written for the Russian exile Serge Diaghilev's *Ballets russes*, a dance company that made Paris the center for experimentation in that art as well. The poet Guillaume Apollinaire, a close friend of Picasso, carried the period's spirit of experiment into yet another domain.

The evolution of prose literature was less radical, but there was a steady move away from the socially oriented naturalism of Zola's day. The female author Colette celebrated women's sexual experience; and the novelist and essayist André Gide, strongly influenced by the nihilism of Friedrich Nietzsche, questioned the basis of conventional moral standards. His heroes were often characters who committed unmotivated crimes (*actes gratuites*) without remorse and without incurring punishment. *Le Grand Meaulnes*, by Alain-Fournier, a novelist whose career was cut short by the First World War, offered readers a curious combination of dream and reality. New literary trends were promoted in the pages of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, destined to remain France's most influential literary journal throughout the interwar period. Gide was its most important contributor and the publisher Gaston Gallimard, who put out the works of many of the period's most original writers, underwrote it.

In philosophy, Henri Bergson, the most important French philosopher of his generation, continued the critique of positivist ideas that had begun to take shape in the 1890s. Bergson did not see himself as an irrationalist, and indeed he proclaimed his ambition to make philosophy a true science. But he argued that the content of human consciousness could not be accounted for solely by the rational analysis of sense data. In particular, the human experience of duration in time took place through a direct, nonrational experience of intuition, rather than through the use of reason and observation. In his *Creative Evolution*, published in 1907, Bergson elaborated on this effort to show that the natural sciences could not fully account for human experience. In this work, he introduced the notion of *élan vital*, or "creative energy," arguing that this force accounted for the human capacity for creative action, and attacked determinist theories of human nature. Bergson's writings and public lectures drew an audience well beyond the narrow circle of professional philosophers. He was popularly understood to be teaching that the nonrational power of intuition and *élan vital* allowed people to shape their own destiny. His criticism of scientific reason seemed to extend a hand to religion, and indeed Bergson himself later converted to Catholicism. His ideas were cited by all those revolting against the constraints of an increasingly structured social reality.

The large audiences for Bergson's public lectures showed that his challenge to the powers of reason resonated with broader cultural tendencies. Many recent historians have seen signs of this movement in the growing appeal of psychological theories about the power of unconscious urges, the flood of journalism devoted to crime and violence, and even the craze for a sensual new dance, the Argentine tango, which was introduced to France shortly before the First World War. Some have linked this feverish cultural climate to an emotionally tinged nationalism that helped push France into war in 1914. At the moment when the war broke out, French public opinion was riveted by the sensational trial of Henriette Caillaux, wife of a leading politician, who had shot and killed a prominent journalist for printing compromising private letters from her husband. Witnesses and attorneys at the trial had aired all the fashionable theories about

the weakness of reason, especially women's reason, in the face of the passions, and Mme. Caillaux was in fact acquitted. Whether the same impulses that led to her acquittal were also behind France's involvement in the brewing conflict is less clear.

Notes

- 1 Cited in David Thomson, ed., *France: Empire and Republic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 284.
- 2 Cited in William A. Hoisington, Jr., *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 11.

22 The Plunge into War

Rising Tensions

For decades before 1914, French elementary school textbooks had taught the nation's children that the country lived "under the threat of another war, possible at any time."¹ But from 1905 onward, that threat came to seem increasingly immediate. After the settlement of the Fashoda crisis in 1898 had ended a period of dangerous confrontation with Britain, Théophile Delcassé, foreign minister from 1898 to 1905, had set out to give France greater security by reaching a broader understanding with the British. The achievement of this "understanding," or *entente*, was not easy. French public sentiment remained anti-British for some time after Fashoda, while the British government was preoccupied by the Boer War in South Africa from 1899 to 1903. Only in 1902, when that war was nearing its end, did the British invite the French government to discuss issues dividing the two countries.

Delcassé and the French ambassador to London, Paul Cambon, enthusiastically embraced the idea. By the spring of 1903, the two governments had worked out an accord by which the French officially accepted British hegemony over Egypt, while the British endorsed France's control over Morocco. King Edward VII's well-publicized visit to Paris in May 1903 contributed significantly to converting French public opinion to a more anglophile stance. The French public, despite its republican loyalties, was dazzled by the glamorous foreign monarch. In April 1904, the two governments reached a general agreement resolving their remaining colonial disputes. This Anglo-French *entente cordiale* was less than a formal defense treaty, but it indicated the two countries' decision to cooperate in international affairs.

Both the French and the British viewed their agreement as a desirable reinforcement in the face of a Germany whose aggressive foreign policy under William II (emperor since 1888) inspired concern. To the Germans, however, it looked as though France, in coordination with Britain and Russia, was creating a hostile alliance encircling them. Berlin lost no time in trying to show the French the risks such a policy involved. From the time William II had dismissed Bismarck in 1890, Germany had complained about not getting its fair share of overseas colonies. Abandoning Bismarck's policy of conciliation with Britain, the Germans had embarked on a massive expansion of their navy, which the British regarded as a direct threat to their security. In 1905, William II visited Morocco and encouraged the sultan to oppose French demands and to call for an international conference to regulate the country's affairs. The Germans made their move at

a clever moment. France's ally, Russia, just defeated in a war against Japan, could not offer support. The French government had to bow to German pressure. Delcassé stepped down, and a conference was convened at Algeciras to decide the fate of Morocco.

In the short run, this first Moroccan crisis seemed to be a diplomatic triumph for Germany at France's expense. But its long-range effects actually served to strengthen the Anglo-French *entente*. Concerned about Germany's aggressive behavior, the British supported France at the Algeciras conference, and agreed for the first time to informal military talks with the French about possible cooperation in the face of a German attack. The French also encouraged London to negotiate an understanding with Russia in 1907 that ended the disputes between those two countries in central Asia. The Moroccan crisis also altered the tone of French public opinion. Charles Péguy, the eloquent essayist who had been one of the leading defenders of Dreyfus, was one of several prominent intellectuals converted from pacifism to vehement patriotism. "Everyone suddenly realized that the menace of a German invasion exists ... that it could really happen,"² he later recalled. From then on, he devoted himself to whipping up national spirit. It would be an exaggeration to claim that the French public became eager for war after 1905, but there was undeniably an increased sense that a conflict might be unavoidable.

In the face of this new atmosphere, the French left shifted its focus from revolution at home to opposition to war. With the failure of the strike agitation that marked the years around 1906, antimilitarism became the left's new rallying point. Jean Jaurès argued that the policy of diplomatic alliances, rather than protecting France against involvement in a conflict, was making war more likely. The country would be better defended by a Swiss-style citizen militia, prepared for defense but clearly not intended to wage offensive campaigns, he maintained. Jaurès hoped that socialist parties in different countries could cooperate to prevent an armed conflict; but if that failed, he still admitted that a defensive war would be justified. A small minority in the trade union movement, often inspired by anarchist principles, took an even more extreme position, advocating the sabotage of military installations and the disruption of mobilization plans in case of a war declaration. Socialist and leftwing antiwar agitation made French government leaders uneasy about the working class's loyalty in case of conflict, but the strength of the antiwar movement showed that only a part of the French public shared the bellicose nationalism of groups like the *Action française*.

With the consolidation of the Triple Entente among France, Russia, and Britain, the major European powers were clearly divided into the two camps that would go to war in 1914. For a few years, however, the Triple Entente made a German attack on France seem less plausible. Some French leaders, notably the Radical Joseph Caillaux, now thought that the two countries could collaborate in certain areas. France and Germany even signed an agreement on economic cooperation in 1909, although it produced few results. There was a renewed diplomatic confrontation between them in 1911, when Germany triggered a second Moroccan crisis to protest French moves that extended its domain beyond what the Algeciras agreement had provided for. But this, too, was settled by a compromise: in exchange for accepting France's control of Morocco, the Germans received a part of the French Congo to add to their colony of Cameroon. Caillaux, the French prime minister of the moment, hailed the resolution of the crisis as the beginning of "a new era" in

Franco-German relations, but he had misjudged the mood in his own country. Criticism of his handling of the affair brought down his government.

The Poincaré Government

The choice of Raymond Poincaré to replace Caillaux and Poincaré's subsequent election as president in January 1913 marked the end of the brief thaw in Franco-German relations. Poincaré, a conservative republican whose family had left their home in annexed Lorraine in the 1870s rather than live under German rule, had long been identified with a policy of firmness toward the Germans. He declared that France "does not want war, but she does not fear it."³ Poincaré tightened military cooperation with France's allies. The British still refused to have their hands tied by written commitments to come to France's aid but, in 1912, the two countries agreed that, in case of a general war, the British would defend France's northern coast against German attack so that the French fleet could be concentrated in the Mediterranean. When Germany decided in 1913 to enlarge its standing army by 200,000 men, the French responded by passing a law requiring draftees to serve for three years instead of two, keeping the French army approximately the size of its neighbor's. From the point of view of Germany's military leaders, the Triple Entente seemed determined to keep them hemmed in at all costs. Of their own allies, the Italians were visibly unreliable and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, menaced by nationalist secession movements, faced a dubious future.

The Balkan crisis resulting from a Serbian nationalist's assassination of the Austrian heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, on June 28, 1914, had little direct relationship to France's interests. But it revealed how the country's 20-year quest for security through alliances had narrowed its options in such a situation. Encouraged by the Germans, the Austrian government quickly decided to use the opportunity to crush Serbia and put a stop to ethnic agitation that threatened the Dual Monarchy. Russia, traditionally hostile to Austria's pretensions in the Balkans, opposed them.

President Poincaré and the French Premier René Viviani happened to be returning by sea from a visit to Russia during the crucial days of the crisis and were thus largely out of touch with fast-moving developments. They left the Russian capital, St. Petersburg, on July 25, 1914, just before the Austrians issued their ultimatum to Serbia. By the time their ship reached France five days later, the Russians, despite French urgings to wait, had begun military mobilization. When the German government sent a last-minute message to Paris on July 31, 1914, asking whether France would stay neutral in case of war between Germany and Russia, the French replied that the country would act "according to its interests." It has been argued that a clearer statement of support for Russia might have deterred the Germans, but in light of what is now known about German official thinking, this seems unlikely. On August 3, 1914, the German declaration of war took the decision out of France's hands. German troops were already invading neutral Belgium to attack France, thereby guaranteeing that Britain—bound by treaty to defend the Belgians against such an attack—would enter the war. The situation that France had prepared for since 1871 had arrived; the question was whether the national community possessed the cohesion and the resources to withstand the German assault.

The Shock

Even as war began in August 1914, few people in France could have imagined that it would come to mark a turning point in the country's history as decisive as 1789. The public and the press had been slow to appreciate the significance of the Serbian crisis until the last days of July 1914. When the conflict suddenly loomed as imminent, there were noisy patriotic demonstrations in a few cities, but prefects' reports on the public mood show that they reflected the attitudes of only a small minority of the population; most were simply resigned to the inevitability of a conflict. While there might have been some hesitation about fighting to defend distant Serbia, or about coming to the aid of the repressive tsarist regime, the German attack made the war one of national self-defense.

Up to that moment, the French government had been concerned that a large sector of the population might not back the war effort. The highly vocal pacifist campaign led by some of the CGT's activists, and the SFIO's resistance to increased military appropriations and to the three-year draft law of 1913, had seemed to show that much of the working class opposed any military engagement. At Jaurès's urging, the SFIO in July 1914 had just voted that, in case of war, a general strike should be called to block mobilization—provided that their comrades in Germany did the same. Fearing the influence of leftwing antiwar activists, the police had drawn up a list of leaders, the so-called *Carnet B*, who were to be arrested in case of war to prevent them from disrupting mobilization. But the events of July 1914 created an unanticipated situation. On July 27, the German Social Democrats, swayed by the argument that Germany faced a hostile foreign coalition bent on its destruction, voted to support their government. The premise underlying the French Socialists' antiwar strategy collapsed. Jaurès still hoped that some means could be found to halt the conflict, but as he and other French Socialist leaders gathered in a Paris café to discuss the emergency on the evening of July 31, 1914, a mentally unbalanced rightwing extremist fired two shots through the window, mortally wounding him.

Jaurès's death silenced the one man who might still have tried to slow the rush to war. It also dissuaded the government from carrying out the arrests of the leftwing activists listed in *Carnet B*. Coming on the heels of Jaurès's assassination, such an action risked provoking the resistance it was meant to prevent. In any event, the other Socialist and trade union leaders, recognizing that their followers were already rallying to the defense of the country, quickly responded to President Poincaré's appeal for a *union sacrée*, a "sacred union" of all French to defend the homeland. In an emotional scene in the Chamber, the veteran Socialist Jules Guesde embraced the Catholic conservative Albert de Mun. In view of the wartime emergency, the SFIO abandoned its policy of refusing to cooperate with other parties. Guesde and another Socialist, Marcel Sembat, entered the government. Feminist leaders, whose campaign for votes for women had seemed to be on the verge of success in the Chamber, suspended their activities and threw themselves into war relief efforts.

Military mobilization was carried out smoothly, in contrast to 1870, and the strength of the initial consensus behind the war was shown by the fact that less than 2 percent of men liable for military duty failed to report. "It was on a sunny late afternoon that I heard the little cathedral bell" announcing the call to duty, the army doctor Louis Maufrais wrote. "The whole world stopped, as if turned to stone. Everyone understood. The women cried, the men on the street, stunned, looked at the bell tower and

said nothing.” In Arras, the young soldier Marcel Riegel and his comrades spent the night drinking, joking that they should be sure to empty all the bottles in town before the Germans could get there.⁴

Patriotic unity and confidence were not enough to meet the German invasion. French military leaders had anticipated a war for many years, but the events of 1914 showed that they had failed to grasp the changes in the nature of warfare that modern weapons had introduced. Like their counterparts elsewhere, France’s generals had anticipated a short war, culminating in one or more decisive battles. The troops mobilized in August were expected to be home by Christmas. Confident that the conflict would resemble the fast-moving campaigns of Napoleon, the French had put their energy into developing weapons for mobile offensive warfare, such as their quick-firing 75 mm field gun, pride of the French army. The military hierarchy rejected proposals to replace traditional French uniforms, with their highly visible red-striped trousers, with anything resembling the Prussians’ dull field gray. To do so, they claimed, would weaken the soldiers’ fighting spirit.

The Germans, too, planned on a quick war, but they had prepared more systematically for it. Since the signing of the Franco-Russian treaty in 1894, the German general staff had assumed that any major war would involve its forces in a struggle on two fronts. It had responded with the Schlieffen plan, designed to deliver a knockout blow against France before the slow-moving Russian army could enter the fight. General Schlieffen’s idea was to send a powerful striking force through neutral Belgium and to cut behind the French forces, concentrated along the northern and eastern borders. If the Germans moved fast enough, they could hope to encircle and defeat the entire French army in a matter of weeks, and then turn their attention to Russia.

In a general sense, the French knew the outlines of the German plan. German preparations, such as the building of extra rail connections to the Belgian border, could not be concealed. But French military planners underestimated the number of divisions the Germans could assemble for this attack and failed to take adequate measures to counter it, such as extending their own rail lines to Belgium. In any event, the French generals were wedded to an offensive strategy of their own. Joseph Joffre, appointed head of the French general staff in 1911, announced his intention to “organize a French offensive and not a defense or response to a German offensive.”⁵ Joffre’s intentions, formalized in the French “Plan XVII” of April 1914, were simple. French forces would cross the border to liberate the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, helped, he hoped, by a popular uprising. They would then turn north and cut off the German invading force in Belgium from the rear. French planners discounted the fact that their troops would have to advance across hilly terrain, unfavorable for an offensive.

The optimistic “Plan XVII” collapsed in the first days of the war. The new weapons of the industrial age made old-fashioned attacking tactics obsolete. Machine guns and heavy artillery brought the planned French advance to a standstill. German forces in Alsace and Lorraine then mounted a menacing invasion of their own. But the greatest danger was in the north, where powerful German columns pushed their way across Belgium with unanticipated speed. From August 19 to 23, in a series of combats (the “Battle of the Frontiers”), the Germans forced the French to retreat from Lorraine in the east and drove the combined Franco-British forces back from the Belgian border. The French public, kept in

ignorance of the German advance by strict censorship—and encouraged to expect a quick victory by reports of Russian advances in the east—was stunned to learn on August 29 that a front had been stabilized “from the Somme to the Vosges”—that is, deep inside France’s frontiers. By September 2, German units were within 30 miles of Paris. The French government was evacuated to Bordeaux, and much of the civilian population fled the city.

Even as the army’s prewar plans disintegrated, however, the French soldiers did not give up the fight. In the face of apparent disaster, the French commander Joffre refused to panic or even to alter his daily routine, with its prolonged afternoon nap. The Russian alliance also contributed to French survival. Russian forces advanced into East Prussia and led the German High Command—sure that the campaign in France was won—to pull two army corps out of its attack force to meet this threat. The Germans won a smashing victory against the Russians at Tannenberg, but they may have let an even greater prize slip away in France.

Battle of the Marne

As the Germans neared Paris, the overconfident commander of the German First Army, the force meant to lead the encirclement of the French, made a fateful alteration to Schlieffen’s plan. His forces were supposed to swing south of Paris, cutting it off from the rest of the country, but when the French and British troops retreated north of the city, he turned to follow them. As he did so, he exposed his army’s flank to a hastily organized French Sixth Army that had been improvised for the defense of the capital under the command of the elderly general Gallieni. Gallieni and Joffre saw the opportunity this German maneuver offered them. Drawing up his forces on the Marne River northeast of Paris, Joffre prepared for a counterattack, to be aided by Gallieni’s thrust against the German flank. To get his troops to the front, Gallieni called on the Paris taxi fleet. These “taxis of the Marne” became an indelible part of the French wartime legend. On September 7, the French, aided by the small British expeditionary force, struck the German troops, exhausted by more than a month of almost continual marching. To meet the French advance from Paris, the German First Army commander von Kluck shifted his forces south, separating himself from the German Second Army to his left. Joffre’s forces and the British advanced into this gap, threatening to split the invaders, and the Germans had to retreat. The Schlieffen plan had misfired, and there would be no repeat of the French collapse in 1870.

“The miracle of the Marne” saved France from defeat, but at a horrendous price. By the end of 1914, over 300,000 French soldiers had already been killed. More than 600,000 were wounded, and hundreds of thousands of others had been taken prisoner and would remain in German camps for the next four years. The French hope of following up their success on the Marne by driving the Germans back across the border proved vain. From September to December 1914, the two rival armies edged to the west in a “race to the sea,” trying to outflank each other. The result was a line of fortified trenches marking a front through northern France and a corner of Belgium that would remain largely unchanged until 1918. German forces remained in control of a broad strip of northern France, including the industrial regions of Lorraine and the Nord. The short and decisive conflict the generals had anticipated had become a grinding struggle whose outcome no one could foresee.



Figure 22.1 The Impact of the War

In addition to the 1.3 million French soldiers killed in the war, hundreds of thousands were taken prisoner by the Germans. Half of the French POWs were captured between August and December 1914 and spent four years behind barbed wire. This drawing, made by a French prisoner in the camp at Friedrichsfeld in northwestern France, vividly conveys the depression or “cafard” that gripped men separated from their families and unable to contribute to their country’s defense.

The Ordeal of the War

French military leaders, under intense pressure from the government to drive the Germans out of the territories they had occupied, were slow to accept the new realities of the war. Throughout 1915, Joffre continued to launch his troops against the well-dug-in Germans, hoping to achieve a decisive breakthrough. Again and again, the French troops found it impossible to advance in the face of barbed wire and merciless machine gun fire from protected positions. The French continued to suffer higher casualties than the enemy in 1915, and Joffre’s assurance that he would “wear them down” became increasingly unrealistic. The Germans’ introduction of poison gas during the 1915 battles added a new element of horror to a war that claimed human lives on an unprecedented scale never before dreamed of.

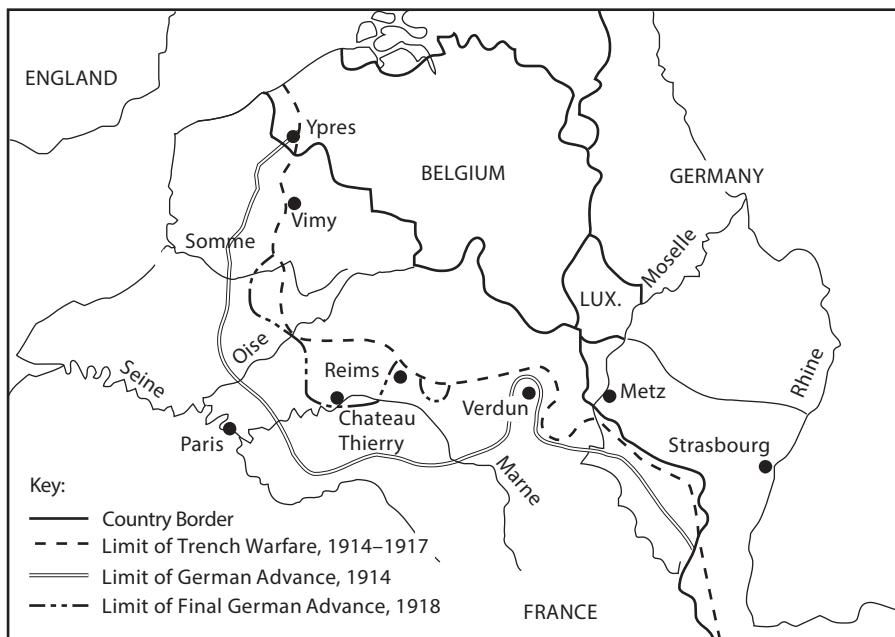
During 1915, the Germans maintained a defensive posture in France, devoting their main effort to an offensive against the Russians in Poland and to an invasion of Serbia which forced the French to divert badly needed resources to try to help their Balkan ally. At the beginning of 1916, however, the German High Command turned its attention back to the west. Falkenhayn, the head of the German general staff, no

longer had any illusions about winning with a knock-out punch. His plan instead was to drag the French into a battle of attrition that would “bleed them white.” His chosen objective was the fortress-city of Verdun, a historic citadel whose abandonment the French would find psychologically impossible. Since the solidification of the front in 1914, the French position at Verdun had formed a vulnerable salient sticking into the German lines. From the strictly military point of view, the French would have been better off abandoning it when the German assault began with a massive artillery barrage on February 21, 1916. As Falkenhayn had calculated, however, the French were determined to hold Verdun. For the next ten months, the guns thundered day and night, turning the few miles of the Verdun salient into an inferno. In the early weeks of the fighting, the Germans captured several of the underground forts surrounding the city but, under the leadership of General Philippe Pétain, a stubborn and patient commander brought to the fore by this crisis, the French clung to their remaining positions.

For the front-line soldiers, the experience was one of almost unimaginable horror. “Verdun is impossible to describe,” the French artilleryman Paul Pireaud wrote to his wife. “The holes made by the 300 [-millimeter shells] could hold fifteen horses. There are no more woods. Shattered trees resemble telegraph poles. It is complete devastation.” Cut off from the rear by the constant shelling, cold, wet, often unable to bury the dead, or evacuate the wounded, the men who survived returned “having lost even the strength to complain,” one officer wrote. “In their eyes was an unheard-of depth of suffering.”⁶ Pétain, who did not want to push his troops beyond the limits of their endurance, insisted on rotating the forces engaged at Verdun so that, during the course of the battle, most of the French army suffered the nightmarish conditions there. A combined Anglo-French assault to the west along the Somme River, begun in late June, diverted some of the German pressure from Verdun, although it produced equally staggering casualty figures for minimal results. By the end of the summer, the German attack on Verdun had lost its momentum. When the battle finally petered out in December, it had cost 163,000 French and 143,000 German lives and left hundreds of thousands of wounded on both sides. As Pétain had promised, the Germans had not broken through. But the French army had been stretched almost to the breaking point.

Verdun was not just the supreme test of the ordinary French soldier’s endurance. It also tested France’s ability to organize its resources for a contest that depended as much on economic productivity and civilian morale as on military factors. Pétain, a cautious, defensive-minded commander, had held on at Verdun because he had understood that “*le feu tue*” (firepower kills) and had insisted on an ever-increasing supply of guns and shells to batter the Germans. To produce war supplies in sufficient quantities required a considerable shake-up in the organization of French life.

Prewar plans had foreseen a short conflict, and no attention had been paid to organizing war production. It had been assumed that the war would be fought with weapons produced beforehand. At the outbreak of hostilities, factories closed down, sending their male workers to the front and leaving the female workers unemployed and often with no income. In the crisis of August 1914, Joffre, the army commander, had assumed virtually autonomous power. The civilian government had retreated to Bordeaux, and the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate—adjourned after August 4, 1914—were not reconvened until December of that year. The battle of the Marne gave



Map 22.1 France in the First World War

France narrowly avoided military catastrophe in 1914, but it took four years of bitter fighting before the Germans were finally forced to surrender. Areas under German occupation for much of the war included many of France's important industrial centers.

General Joffre immense prestige, and he showed little inclination to share power with mere elected officials. The entire country was put under military law, and army officers exercised powers normally reserved for civilian officials, including the right to arrest and try noncombatants. Strict censorship kept the public in ignorance of the military situation. Republican government seemed on the verge of becoming one of the war's casualties.

As it became clear that the war would be a long ordeal, the civilian government gradually reasserted itself. Parliamentary deputies, many of them mobilized in August, began to criticize military deficiencies that threatened to undermine the war effort. Georges Clemenceau, then out of office, was one of the army's sternest critics. The censors seized his paper, *L'Homme libre* (*The Free Man*), for the first time on September 29, 1914. At that point, Clemenceau renamed it *L'Homme enchaîné* (*The Man in Chains*) and continued his campaign against the failings of the army's medical services and other shortcomings.

The failure of Joffre's offensives in 1915 emboldened critics, as did the generals' persistent refusal to recognize the need to increase production of heavy artillery, machine guns, and other weapons needed for trench warfare. Within a few months, it had become evident that workers with special skills needed to be withdrawn from the front to maintain vital production lines. In the course of 1915, nearly 500,000 soldiers

were relieved for this purpose. With much of the prewar male workforce at the front, French factories had to employ increased numbers of women, who were put to work in many sectors previously closed to them. The French had discussed recruiting troops from the Empire even before the war, although little had been done to organize such units. Once the conflict began, the colonies were called upon not only for soldiers, like the famous *tirailleurs sénégalais* (Senegalese riflemen), but for laborers as well. French leaders considered military service a “debt” that colonial populations owed the metropole in exchange for the benefits of European rule, a notion not shared by many of the men pressured into uniform. By 1918, more than a third of the adult male population of Algeria was serving in metropolitan France, as were 200,000 troops from West Africa and 140,000 soldiers and laborers from Indochina. The war thus seemed to confirm earlier arguments about the Empire’s value for France.

The war forced the Third Republic to abandon any idea of leaving the economy to its own devices. To increase war production and avoid wasteful competition for scarce raw materials, the government encouraged the formation of coordinating committees among leading enterprises in each branch of the economy. Albert Thomas, one of the socialists who had entered the government in 1914 as part of the *union sacrée*, emerged as the leading architect of France’s war economy. Appointed undersecretary for artillery and military equipment in May 1915—partly in reaction to the army’s persistent failure to give priority to the production of heavy weapons—and eventually named minister of armaments in December 1916, he sought to improve productivity. Thomas saw the wartime situation as an opportunity to win greater recognition for unions, and benefits for workers. Government intervention forced employers to grant workers’ organizations some recognition, and the state encouraged manufacturers to yield to workers’ wage demands to prevent strikes and interruptions of production. To some extent, the wartime experience seemed to confirm the arguments of prewar reformists in the labor movement that state intervention could give workers more recognition and a greater share of the benefits of industrialization.

Thanks in part to the organizing efforts of Thomas and others, French industry succeeded in expanding war production considerably, even though the invasion of 1914 had left the Germans in control of regions that had furnished 75 percent of prewar France’s coal production and 61 percent of its steel. Whole new industries, such as aviation, grew to meet military needs, and firms that were able to respond to wartime demands—such as the auto manufacturers Citroën, Peugeot, and Renault—expanded tremendously during the war. French weapons, deficient at the start of the conflict, improved steadily during the war years. By the end of the struggle, France was equipping not only its own forces but also those of many of its allies, particularly the United States.

The French government was considerably less imaginative about paying for the war than it was about encouraging war production. Some historians have remarked that the country’s leaders were more willing to call on the citizens to sacrifice their lives than their money. Rather than raising taxes to meet the extraordinary expenses imposed by the conflict, the successive wartime governments relied primarily on the printing of additional currency and on borrowing. Propaganda campaigns encouraged the population to put its surplus savings into war bonds, which paid what appeared to be high interest rates. And the government borrowed extensively from the British and later from the United States, incurring war debts amounting to

almost 40 billion francs. Wartime conditions hardly permitted the maintenance of a balanced budget, but the government encouraged the belief that, once victory had been achieved, “the *Boche* will pay.” It expected to extract reparations from the enemy that would allow it to reimburse its creditors without burdening the citizenry. Until the end of the fighting, wartime controls and support from the Allies made it possible to limit inflation. But after the armistice in 1918, France began to experience the severe inflation that was to become one of its chronic problems for the next 70 years.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Eugen Weber, *Fin du Siècle*, P. Delamare, trans. (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 133.
- 2 Cited in Raoul Girardet, *Le nationalisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), 251.
- 3 Cited in Pierre Miquel, *Poincaré* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), 272.
- 4 Louis Maufrais, *J'étais médecin dans les tranchées* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2008), 31; Marcel Riegel, *Souvenirs de guerre 1914–1918* (Condé-sur-Noireau: La Cause des Livres, 2008), 35.
- 5 Cited in Pierre Miquel, *La Grande Guerre* (Paris: Fayard, 1983), 45.
- 6 Cited in Martha Hanna, *Your Death Would Be Mine: Paul and Marie Piureau in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 78; Marc Ferro, *La Grande Guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 167.

23 Crisis, Victory, and Disillusionment

The End of the *Union Sacrée*

By the time the fighting at Verdun died down in December 1916, the illusion that the war would be short and glorious had long since evaporated. As the casualty figures continued to mount, some voices began to be raised in protest against the apparent senselessness of continuing the struggle. At the outset of the fighting, when one well-known writer, Romain Rolland, had taken refuge in neutral Switzerland and condemned the conflict, he had been almost alone. All of France's political parties, the trade union movement, the Catholic Church, and leading intellectuals of all tendencies had initially rallied to the policy of *union sacrée*.

The first organized opposition to the continuation of the war developed among minority groups in the leftwing movements that had denounced militarism prior to 1914. Louise Saumoneau, a longtime activist in the Socialist party, was one of the first to engage herself actively. She attended a women's peace conference convened in Switzerland by the German socialist Clara Zetkin in March 1915 and was arrested for circulating antiwar tracts in Paris later that year. Some bourgeois feminists, such as schoolteacher Hélène Brion, also broke away from the patriotic majority in their organizations and sought to rebuild the international pacifist movement they had supported before the war.

Most socialists and trade unionists continued to support the war effort but, by July 1915, an organized group within the SFIO began to criticize the party's wholehearted support for the government and urge greater efforts to end the fighting. These "minority" socialists received less than 10 percent of the vote at the first wartime party congress in September 1915, but by the end of 1916, they represented nearly half of the party—losing a crucial vote in December 1916 by only 1,537 to 1,407. A similar current developed within the CGT. Two dissident French unionists participated in a socialist peace conference at Zimmerwald, in Switzerland, in September 1915. In 1916, the pacifists in the union movement formed a Syndicalist Defense Committee openly opposed to the continuation of the *union sacrée*. Wartime censorship limited public debate about the war, but did not entirely suppress it. In 1916, the writer Henri Barbusse (who had served in the trenches) was able to publish his grimly realistic novel, *Le Feu*, culminating with an appeal for peace. By July 1918, it had sold 200,000 copies—a figure considerably outweighed, it is true, by the patriotic literature encouraged by the war.

The events of the first half of 1917 raised much more serious questions about France's continuing participation in the conflict. The first months of the year saw two major changes in the international situation. In March (February according to the

Julian calendar still used in Russia), a revolution in Russia overthrew the Tsarist regime. A provisional government pledged to democratic reforms and to continuing the war took its place, but the disorganization caused by the revolution diminished Russia's contribution to the Allied war effort. On the other hand, in April 1917, in reaction to Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, the United States entered the war on the Allied side. The United States, with its small army, at first added little to the Allied forces. But its large population and great economic resources promised to be decisive in the long run.

Having outlasted the Germans at Verdun, the French high command believed the time was ripe for the long-dreamed counteroffensive that would break the German lines and decide the war. General Joffre, the hero of 1914, had been eased out of command by the end of 1916. He was replaced by General Nivelle, who had led the reconquest of key fortified positions at Verdun. Despite the skepticism of generals such as Pétain, who doubted that the German trenches could be so easily penetrated, and of many politicians appalled by the losses in earlier offensives, Nivelle planned a new attack in Champagne. He refused to alter his intentions, even when the Germans surprised their foes by withdrawing to a stronger defensive position in the weeks before the French attack.

The Army Mutinies

On April 16, 1917, the French soldiers went "over the top" along the Aisne, in an attack as futile as the bloody efforts of the preceding two years. In two weeks, Nivelle lost 147,000 men. Postal censors compiled a devastating list of the words *poilus* (front-line soldiers) used in their letters home to describe the offensive: "Fiasco, lynching, botched, misfire, massacre, butchery, failure."¹ A wave of disturbances, some amounting to outright mutinies, swept through the French units, affecting more than half the army's divisions. In a few cases, soldiers adopted revolutionary slogans and demanded immediate peace. But most of the protesters limited their actions to a refusal to obey orders to attack, and to demands for better treatment for ordinary soldiers. Still willing to defend their positions against the Germans, the war-weary infantrymen refused to waste their lives in hopeless frontal assaults on the enemy trenches.

Rigorous secrecy kept news of the army's disaffection from reaching the civilian population and, more importantly, the Germans. Nivelle was hastily replaced by Pétain, the hero of Verdun—respected by the troops for his concern about avoiding unnecessary casualties. Pétain restored army discipline, sending more than 3,000 protest leaders before martial courts and ordering the execution of at least 49. But he also took positive steps to improve morale. Front-line soldiers were guaranteed better food. Home leaves became more regular, and soldiers were ensured of priority on trains so they could actually reach their families. Above all, Pétain kept the army on the defensive—waiting, as he put it, "for the Americans and the tanks"—and let the British carry the brunt of the fighting in the second half of 1917. The army responded to his combination of firmness and attention to soldiers' complaints because France's soldiers remained fundamentally loyal to the country. Unlike the soldiers of the Russian army, whose mass desertion after the revolution in their country in February 1917 showed that they had lost all attachment to the Tsarist regime, the French *poilus* were willing to go on fighting once they were convinced that their commanders would not waste their lives needlessly.

Civilian Protests

The crisis at the front in the spring of 1917 coincided with growing unrest among the civilian population. Although overall casualty figures were kept secret, the mounting losses were evident. A young Norman bonnet maker later recalled, “Battles weren’t fought on our fields; we weren’t occupied; neither combatants nor wounded, nor ambulances nor munitions crossed our paths,” but by 1917, she and her mother had made so many black-veiled mourning hats for their clients that “every woman in Lisieux and the countryside had one.”² Prefects’ reports on the state of public opinion indicated a decline in home-front morale, particularly in urban areas where rising food prices added to complaints in the first half of 1917. Labor unrest, which had been negligible in 1915 and 1916 as workers gave their support to the war effort, began to mount. The antiwar Syndicalist Defense Committee drew 5,000 to 10,000 people to a Paris rally on May 1. Soon after, strikes—many of them staged by women workers in the clothing industry—showed that the national consensus behind the war effort was fraying. Protests against the war were not limited to metropolitan France. In 1916 and 1917, there were revolts against military recruitment and increased taxes in several regions of West Africa and Algeria.

France’s political leaders were not immune to the concerns that affected soldiers and ordinary civilians. In the course of 1915 and 1916, the political unity achieved at the outbreak of war had broken down and traditional political rivalries had begun to reassert themselves. None of the successive premiers in the first three years of the war managed to impose themselves as strong leaders capable of bringing the country through its ordeal. By early 1917, many leading politicians had become convinced that a military victory was unattainable. A German document concluded that “an important number of French politicians hoped for negotiations with Germany, without saying so publicly.”³ Joseph Caillaux (the prominent prewar premier who was still a leading figure among the Radicals); Aristide Briand, prime minister from July 1916 to March 1917; and Paul Painlevé (who held the post briefly in the fall of 1917), all had contacts of one kind or another with German representatives. Caillaux in particular became compromised by his encounters with several personalities whose activities crossed the line from searching for compromise to serving German interests. By September 1917, the Socialists decided to withdraw from the government, arguing that it was preventing efforts to find a formula for ending the fighting. Because the German government still refused to consider any agreement for ending the war that involved returning Alsace-Lorraine to France, contacts with them came to nothing. But the willingness of French leaders to engage in discussions showed that, even at the highest levels, there was doubt about the wisdom of continuing the struggle to the end.

The Home Front

The strike movements and other signs of protest in 1917 reflected the fact that the entire population had been affected by the continuation of the war. The war’s effect was not the same, of course, in every region, and individuals suffered differently depending on their social class and gender. But the first of the twentieth century’s total wars had an impact broader than any event in France since the Revolution. An entire generation of young and middle-aged men were wrenched from their homes and families, and plunged into a violent existence far removed from the orderly routines of

civilian life. In wartime propaganda, much was made of the way the common ordeal of military service broke down prewar barriers, such as those between Catholics and supporters of anticlerical secularism. But the war experience also created new divisions, such as those between the *poilus* at the front and men who managed to find some way to avoid service. There was also a division between the civilian population in the regions occupied by the Germans—subjected to a harsh military regime, cut off from news, and affected along with their occupiers by the Allied economic blockade—and those living in areas far behind the lines who never saw physical effects of the conflict.

The coming of the war and the proclamation of the *union sacrée* had given workers and the labor movement a degree of public recognition and political influence they had never enjoyed before. Workers in occupations considered vital to the war effort, such as miners and metalworkers, were exempt from front-line service, and the government pressured employers to improve pay and working conditions in order to prevent unrest in the factories. Hailed as essential cogs in the war machine, workers gained a new sense of self-importance and a correspondingly enlarged sense of entitlement. At the same time, however, the war undermined their position in certain respects. Economic regulation was not enough to keep wages from lagging behind rising prices. Although workers were better off than groups with fixed incomes, such as retirees, by 1917 they were acutely aware of their inability to keep up with the cost of living. Changes in the workplace also threatened the status of skilled male workers. Employers introduced new machinery that often simplified tasks, allowing them to replace skilled labor with women and less-skilled men. Labor union officials opposed the employment of women and joined forces with conservative groups to make sure they were squeezed out of factory work when the war ended.

While workers gained some status as a result of the war, other social categories lost. The peasant farmers who still made up half the total population provided a disproportionate number of front-line soldiers and casualties. Women, children, and the aged had to replace them as best they could, and agricultural production fell during the war. Those who had surplus products to sell profited from wartime shortages, but families who lost their male breadwinner were often unable to keep their enterprises going. The petty bourgeoisie of shopkeepers and civil servants—a group that had grown considerably in the decades before the war—were not able to claim indispensability and avoid service as successfully as the proletariat. Women successfully replaced many of them, and this group also suffered financially as salaries lagged further and further behind inflation.

Much was written at the time, and more has been written since, about the war's impact on women. Necessity forced the breaching of barriers that had long limited their access to many occupations. Employers needed replacements for men, and women—unable to support their families on the meager allocations given to soldiers' families—needed sources of income. Some women were recruited for factory jobs, particularly in the munitions plants that mushroomed as a result of the war, although they never made up more than 15 percent of the industrial workforce. War conditions allowed women access to many other jobs that had previously been closed to them, however. Women became bus conductors, delivered mail, and replaced male colleagues as school directors. With their husbands gone, many peasant women had to take charge of family farms, making business decisions that were normally a male preserve. The army had to overcome its long-standing prejudice against female nurses at the front. Like charity work at home, this was an occupation that fit conventional notions

about proper sex roles. It was also one where class divisions between unpaid volunteer nurses from wealthy families and salaried nurses (often from more modest backgrounds) were painfully evident.

The evidence about women's participation in the war effort is clear. Whether this experience permanently altered mentalities is harder to determine. During the war, many women certainly learned to act more independently. They became accustomed to wearing less elaborate and less constraining clothing—the corset was one permanent casualty of the war—and to going out in public on their own. Popular mythology assumed that women came to enjoy greater sexual freedom. Cartoons and jokes expressed French soldiers' fears that their wives and girlfriends were taking advantage of the wartime situation—perhaps by enjoying the company of the thousands of American troops who began to arrive in 1917. Like factory workers, many women came to think differently about themselves. But prevailing male attitudes remained much more traditional, as the postwar period was to demonstrate. Male workers made it clear that they would not tolerate women in factories once the wartime emergency ended, and the conviction that woman's natural place was in the home remained strong. Even many women's groups shared the belief that, in view of the heavy losses caused by the war, women had a patriotic duty to have children.

The war also set in motion major changes in the relationship between France and its colonial populations. For the first time, large numbers of men from the colonies were brought to metropolitan France, where they were exposed to both the attractions and the racial prejudices of European life. Although African American troops sent to France with the American army felt that they were treated better than they were at home, French colonial troops and laborers often experienced discrimination. French soldiers at the front protested against the employment of colonial troops to keep order in factories where large numbers of French women were employed, for example, and cases where colonial soldiers did fall in love with French women, such as hospital nurses, caused official alarm. French officials recognized that "we cannot require of our colonial subjects the same military obligations we require of ourselves while we have not conceded them the same civil rights," but they could not overcome their concern about granting full citizenship to men from such different cultural backgrounds.⁴ In spite of such difficulties, the war also presented possibilities for positive changes. Some French leaders encouraged expectations that the colonies' contributions to the war effort would bring rewards for their populations. Inspired by such hopes, Blaise Diagne, the black deputy from Senegal, volunteered to direct the recruitment effort in West Africa after the protests of 1917. He succeeded in enlisting 63,000 men. Other men from the colonies were stirred by the American president Woodrow Wilson's talk of national rights to self-determination and by news of the Russian Revolution. The young Vietnamese Ho Chi Minh, the future leader of the Communist movement that would drive the French out of Indochina in 1954, first came into contact with radical ideas as a result of his wartime service in France.

Clemenceau the "Tiger"

Drained by the steadily mounting losses at the front, demoralized by a sense that the war would never end, and stressed by the social tensions mobilization generated, France by late 1917 seemed close to the kind of breakdown that had forced Russia out of the war. When the Painlevé cabinet lost a vote of confidence in November 1917, the French

president, Poincaré, decided that the time had come to abandon the effort to find a premier who could, through parliamentary compromises, hold together the increasingly fragile *union sacrée*. He turned instead to the 75-year-old Georges Clemenceau, detested by the Socialists for his hard-line policy against social protests in 1906 to 1909 and by many of his fellow Radicals for his strident attacks against the way the war had been conducted.

Despite his age, Clemenceau brought a new vigor to the French government. The “Tiger of France” left no doubt about the policy he intended to conduct: “war, nothing but war.”⁵ Instead of giving ministerial posts to other leading politicians, Clemenceau appointed minor figures and made most decisions himself in collaboration with a few trusted aides. At home, he cracked down on the *demi-monde* of double agents with German contacts, several of whom were executed. He silenced political advocates of a compromise peace, such as Caillaux (arrested in January 1918), and the women’s peace advocate Hélène Brion. To build army morale, he made frequent visits to the front, speaking not only to generals but also to ordinary soldiers. For the first time since the war began, France had a leader with a clear policy and the personal authority to carry it out. Clemenceau’s policy could only succeed, however, because the army and the population were ready to support him. Changes in the treatment of soldiers and civilian workers after the protests in mid-1917 had convinced members of both groups that their concerns had been heard. German intransigence showed that there was no possibility of a compromise peace on terms that France could accept. By the end of 1917, much of the French public was ready for a “second mobilization,” a grimly determined effort to see the war through to the end.⁶

Such leadership was sorely needed in the spring of 1918. With Russia definitely out of the fighting after the seizure of power by Lenin and his Bolshevik Communist party in November 1917, Germany was determined to make an all-out bid for military victory before the growing American army could tilt the balance to the Allies. The German commander, Ludendorff, had a new formula for breaking the military stalemate. The German troops launched surprise attacks, rapidly penetrating the enemy lines. When their advances were halted, they broke off the fighting rather than bogging down in battles of attrition, and transferred the offensive to another sector of the front. Beginning in late March, the Germans launched a series of hammer blows that sent the Allies reeling. A new monster cannon, which the French dubbed “Big Bertha,” shelled Paris from a distance of 60 miles, killing over 200 civilians. In May, a German attack brought the enemy to within 35 miles of Paris. The pessimistic Pétain, fearing a breakthrough, urged Clemenceau to move the government out of the capital.

Ludendorff’s offensives battered the Allies, but did not break them. The initial attacks in March precipitated one critical decision. At a meeting on March 26, 1918, they agreed for the first time to create a unified military command controlling all their forces on the western front. Since the French army remained larger than the British or American forces, the post of commander-in-chief had to go to a French general. Pétain, as overall French commander, was the logical choice, but Clemenceau thought him too cautious. He swung his weight behind a general who shared more of his own aggressive instincts, Ferdinand Foch. The first few months of Foch’s command were a critical time. The German offensives continued to achieve substantial gains of territory and, behind the lines, a series of strikes in key munitions plants showed that French workers were increasingly adopting pacifist and defeatist sentiments. But time was running out for the German army. On July 15, for the first time, one of Ludendorff’s attacks failed, and the momentum shifted to the Allied side.

On July 18, 1918, French and American forces, using a massed force of 1,000 tanks (a wartime first), opened a counteroffensive against the extended German lines at Villers-Cotterets, east of Paris. By the end of August, the Allies had retaken all the territory lost during the spring. Foch was by no means confident of ending the war in 1918, but he continued to push the Germans back, first in one sector, then in another, sure that the growing American army would give him an ever-increasing superiority. Ludendorff had already concluded that defeat could not be prevented. On September 28, he told his government that it must conclude an armistice as quickly as possible.

Rather than addressing themselves to the French, the Germans turned to the American president Woodrow Wilson, whose widely publicized “Fourteen Points,” issued in January 1918, had held out the prospect of a relatively moderate peace settlement. To the intense annoyance of the French and British, Wilson negotiated with the Germans without consulting them. Some French leaders opposed the granting of any armistice until Allied troops had actually entered German territory and made their victory unmistakable. But most, including Clemenceau, were willing to settle for a quick end to the war rather than pressing on to total victory. Foch, for his part, insisted that the Germans at least be forced to withdraw their forces behind the Rhine; that Allied troops be allowed to occupy several bridgeheads on the German side of the river; and that the Germans be compelled to turn over large quantities of weapons and supplies. Most of these demands were finally included in the armistice agreement; French concerns were thus not entirely disregarded.

And so, at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918, the war in France finally came to an end. The Assembly received Clemenceau with thunderous cheers and, in the streets of Paris, crowds danced with joy. At the front, one soldier wrote, “some hugged each other, others jumped up and down and danced, others tried to sing, while some cried ... My head hurt, and I wanted to laugh as much as I wanted to cry.”⁷ Battered and exhausted, France had nevertheless survived an ordeal without precedent. The institutions of the Third Republic appeared intact. When the need had been greatest, they had brought to the fore the statesman and the generals who led the country to victory. But the struggle had taken a heavy toll—one whose full extent would not be apparent until France once again faced a German invasion in 1940.

The Postwar Settlement

The fighting ended with German representatives accepting the armistice terms dictated by a French commander, and the negotiations for the peace were convened in France as well. At Versailles, the victorious Allies debated the treaty to be signed with their principal enemy, Germany. Negotiators housed in other historic palaces outside the French capital settled the postwar fate of the Kaiser’s former allies. France thus appeared to hold the central role in the most sweeping rearrangement of Europe’s frontiers since the Congress of Vienna. In reality, however, France’s ability to impose its views was limited. The rapturous welcome Paris gave the American president, Woodrow Wilson, when he arrived in person to take part in the peace conference was in part a recognition that—for the first time—the United States would play a major part in Europe’s affairs. French enthusiasm for the highminded American leader quickly cooled as it became clear that his ideas were far removed from those of French leaders and most of the French public. Britain and France had stood together through four difficult

years, but old rivalries and differences of opinion now came to the surface. And far to the east, the new Communist regime in Russia—excluded from the peacemaking and fighting for its life against an array of foes, including a French expeditionary force on the Black Sea coast—offered the peoples of Europe a vision of a new society that would abolish war and exploitation.

In this highly charged atmosphere, the government of Clemenceau was bound to come into conflict with its allies in its efforts to obtain a postwar settlement with Germany which would help France recover from the devastating losses it had suffered and insure the country against any such catastrophe in the future. The French impulse to “make the *Boche* pay” and to keep Germany too weak to threaten France in the future ran counter to the need to maintain good relations with France’s wartime allies. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, in particular, intended the peace that would conclude what he called “the war to end all wars” to be a conciliatory one. The peace negotiations that began in January 1919 were thus controversial at the time and have remained so ever since. Within France itself, there was a division between those who wanted to see Germany permanently weakened—perhaps even split into several states—and those who doubted the possibility or the wisdom of so harsh a policy.

General Foch, the supreme commander of the Allied forces at the end of the war, was the leader of the hard-line party. He convinced Clemenceau to demand French control of all German territory west of the Rhine River—land that had been annexed to France during the Napoleonic period. Other French demands included the return of Alsace-Lorraine, already accomplished under the armistice agreement; control over the Saarland, whose coal mines were to compensate France for the damage done to its own mines; reparations to finance reconstruction; and permanent limits on Germany’s military strength. In pushing for a “hard” peace, Clemenceau accurately represented most segments of French public opinion. Only the Socialists on the left openly favored a more conciliatory approach.

History has tended to present the peace conference as a duel between a vengeful but largely unsuccessful Clemenceau and an overly idealistic Woodrow Wilson. In reality, the French were not as unsuccessful in pressing their demands as has often been claimed. They achieved not only a favorable distribution of the reparations demanded from Germany—52 percent of which were to go to France—but also a list of other economic demands drawn up during the war and meant to favor expansion of French industry in the postwar period. Nor was the opposition between Clemenceau and Wilson as complete as it has often been made to appear. France did not oppose Wilson’s cherished plan for a League of Nations to maintain the peace. In fact, the French representative to the commission that drew up the League charter—the venerable republican politician Léon Bourgeois—tried to give the League real substance by proposing that it have an armed intervention force. When Wilson rejected the suggestion, French enthusiasm for what struck them as a plan without real teeth cooled.

Clemenceau also quickly realized that the Americans and the British would not accept either French annexation of the Rhineland or a separate French-sponsored state there. He had to settle for temporary Allied occupation of those territories, coupled with a promise from Wilson and the British prime minister, Lloyd George, to give France treaty guarantees against any future German aggression. One of Clemenceau’s French biographers, Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, concludes that, far from systematically opposing Wilson, “Clemenceau sacrificed the full realization of his goals to the maintenance of an alliance which he considered more solid than it really was.”⁸ If

Clemenceau yielded a good deal to the Americans in the negotiations, Wilson, for his part, was not totally hostile to French demands. He sided with Clemenceau against Lloyd George, who would have softened many of the treaty terms in the interests of helping the German government gain a solid base of public support in its struggle against the revolutionary movement in its own country. Neither man realized that the United States Senate would eventually reject any permanent American guarantee to France and any American participation in the League of Nations, thereby depriving Clemenceau of an essential aspect of what he had bargained for.

The final settlement agreed on at Versailles and accepted reluctantly by the German representatives thus took French interests into account. France recovered Alsace-Lorraine. To guarantee the country's military security, the Rhineland was to be occupied by Allied troops for 15 years, and was to remain permanently demilitarized. Germany's army was limited to 100,000 men, and its military could not possess tanks, military airplanes, or submarines. Other treaty provisions were meant to compensate France for its economic losses. Germany agreed to pay reparations, whose amount was to be determined in future negotiations. To make up for its ruined coal mines, France was to receive the coal production from the Saar for 15 years, after which a plebiscite would determine whether the area would be returned to Germany. The Germans had to allow French exports into their country duty-free, while the French were not required to reciprocate. Germany's colonies were divided among the Allies, France regaining the African territories it had ceded during the second Moroccan crisis. The postwar redistribution of the territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire—which had entered the war on Germany's side—brought further additions to the French empire. France was to administer Lebanon and Syria under mandates from the League of Nations, although the French public had little interest in these territorial gains.

The Versailles peace settlement, if it gave France less than some of the country's leaders wanted in the way of territories and guarantees against a German resurgence, thus paid a fair amount of attention to French concerns. Clemenceau, presenting the pact to the Assembly, reminded critics that France had not won the war alone, and had therefore had to compromise with its allies. The great question was whether the treaty would work as planned. The German government, compelled to accept under protest a war guilt clause alleging that Germany alone had been responsible for the outbreak of the conflict and a reparations bill whose full extent was not to be set until 1921, was bound to try to change the settlement. France's allies could not be counted on to help maintain it. France would have to rely on its own resources to make the treaty function as the French government thought it should.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Robert A. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 363.
- 2 Bonnie G. Smith, *Confessions of a Concierge: Madame Lucie's History of Twentieth-Century France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 34.
- 3 Cited in Jean-Jacques Becker and Serge Bernstein, *Victoire et frustrations, 1914–1929* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), 116.
- 4 Cited in Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 236.
- 5 Cited in Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Clemenceau* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 624.

- 6 This theme is strongly emphasized in Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), the most recent overall treatment of the French war effort.
- 7 Cited in Leonard Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division During World War I* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 243.
- 8 Duroselle, *Clemenceau*, 758.

24 France between the Wars

No matter how often one reads the figures for France's losses in the First World War, they remain starkly impressive. Almost 1,300,000 French soldiers killed—one out of every ten adult men in the population; over 300,000 men classified as *mutilés*, so severely injured that they could not work; 1 million more partially handicapped; 600,000 widows. In proportion to its population, no other major combatant nation was so severely stricken.

Certainly the memory of the war remained vivid throughout the 1920s, a decade "when the memorials to the fallen were still new," as one historian born in the period put it.¹ An entire generation had served at the front. In 1930, 45 out of every 100 adult males in the population were veterans. Like the American soldiers who served in Vietnam or more recent wars, these *ex-poilus* had difficulties digesting the horrors they had experienced. Many were haunted for years by the memories of comrades killed in the trenches, or the faces of enemy soldiers they themselves had shot. It would be easy to conclude from these facts—and from our knowledge of the disastrous defeat that France was to suffer in 1940—that the victory of 1918 was a Pyrrhic one, leaving the country too gravely scarred by its experience to recover. Such a conclusion would be too hasty, however. French society showed considerable vitality in coping with the war's impact during the 1920s. Its weaknesses were only to become glaringly evident in the face of the unanticipated problems of the 1930s, particularly the world economic depression and the triumph of Nazism in Germany.

Nevertheless, the challenges facing France at the end of the war were daunting. The impact on France's population was long lasting. With so many men absent at the front from 1914 to 1918, the number of births had fallen sharply. For decades, the French population pyramid was marked by the *classes creuses*, the abnormally small population cohorts born in the war years who were just entering adulthood when the Second World War broke out. France, already different from its neighbors before 1914 because of its low birth rate and its higher proportion of older people, became even more a country of old men and single women during the 1920s and 1930s. Many historians have explained the country's social conservatism and lack of dynamism in this period in terms of this population pattern. This picture must be modified, however, by taking immigration into account. At a time when countries that had traditionally been havens for immigrants (particularly the United States) were erecting barriers against newcomers, France took in an influx of laborers—mostly young men from Italy, Poland, and Spain—to fill the ranks decimated by the war. Employers' organizations systematically recruited these foreign workers, many of whom eventually married French nationals and acquired citizenship. Immigrants from the French

colonies were less welcome—a 1919 law ostensibly meant to reward the colonial population’s contribution to the war effort by making it easier to qualify for French citizenship in fact added to the obstacles candidates faced—but the demand for labor brought in many Algerians.

The material costs of the war were as staggering as the number of lives lost. All across the northern departments, houses, factories, public buildings, roads, bridges, and rail lines had been destroyed. National monuments like the great Gothic cathedral of Reims were in ruins. The retreating Germans had flooded the coal mines in the occupied territories. Over 5 million acres of farmland were out of production, some of it so full of unexploded shells or poisonous chemicals that it could never be used again. And France had limited resources to cope with the task of reconstruction. The extraordinary expenses imposed by four years of fighting had amounted to 16 times the annual government budget of the prewar period. In this respect, too, however, the situation was not as catastrophic as the bare statistics make it appear. The task of rebuilding was in some ways an economic stimulus—providing numerous jobs, especially in the construction trades.

The Domestic Atmosphere

The peace negotiations were not the only preoccupation in France in the months following the end of the fighting. Social tensions that had built up during the conflict burst into the open afterward as well. By the last months of the war, a large number of workers had adopted revolutionary ideas, as the strike wave of May to June 1918 had shown. The news that had reached France about the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in November 1917 inspired labor and socialist militants, who had turned against the war and the bourgeois society that supported it, with aspirations to transform their own country. The government tried to forestall working-class agitation at the end of the war by conceding the 8-hour workday, a goal the unions had long pushed for. But passage of a law to this effect in April 1919 was not enough to end worker unrest. There was an extensive wave of protests and demonstrations in the spring of 1919, coinciding with agitation in other European countries. The defeat of this strike wave frustrated leftwing militants, but did not end their hopes of emulating the Bolsheviks.

Parliamentary elections had been postponed during the war. They were finally scheduled for November 1919. The SFIO, increasingly crippled by divisions between moderates and revolutionaries, went into the campaign having adopted a platform that ruled out election agreements with any of the “bourgeois” parties. At the same time, most of the center and right groups joined in a *Bloc national* that appealed to patriotic sentiment by putting up war veterans as candidates and used the fear of Russian-style revolution to win votes. A striking poster of a long-haired “Red” with a knife clenched between his teeth conveyed the message that the election was a choice between “voting against Bolshevism or voting for Bolshevism.” As a result, the elections produced a clear defeat for the leftist parties that had dominated the Chamber from the time of Dreyfus to the outbreak of the war. Even though the SFIO actually drew more votes than it had in 1914, it won only 68 seats in the Chamber, down from 102 in the last prewar elections. The *bleu horizon* Chamber, so-called in reference to the sky-blue color of French soldiers’ uniforms, was skewed further to the right than any previous French legislature of the Third Republic.

One of the first casualties of the new political climate was Clemenceau, the “Tiger” who had led the country to victory. Catholic conservatives, who had provided many of the votes for the *Bloc national*, opposed him because of his lifelong anticlericalism, while the left denounced his authoritarianism during the war. He had hoped to be elected president in January 1920 in place of Raymond Poincaré, but the deputies rejected him. Clemenceau’s defeat marked the resumption of French parliamentary politics as usual after the wartime hiatus. Alexandre Millerand, the one-time socialist who had by this time migrated to the center-right, succeeded Clemenceau and soon after became president.

Millerand’s government was immediately confronted with the largest wave of working-class protest the country had experienced since 1906. In the course of 1920, 1.3 million workers participated in strikes, often launched in support of revolutionary demands put forward by members of the network of Syndicalist Revolutionary Committees that grouped supporters of a Russian-style revolution in France. A general strike paralyzed the railroad system in February 1920, followed by lengthy work stoppages in the crucial coal mining regions in the north. On May 1, 1920, roughly 500,000 marchers participated in the traditional parade in Paris, and fights with the police resulted in a death and numerous injuries. The holiday was the prelude to a further round of strikes. Millerand’s government and France’s employers reacted with severity. Fifteen thousand striking railroad workers lost their jobs, and numerous labor leaders went to jail. By May 21, 1920, the CGT trade union confederation, whose reformist leader, Léon Jouhaux, had been pushed into strike action by the revolutionary minority, called off the strike wave. As its failure became obvious, disillusioned workers quit their unions in large numbers. The defeat of 1920 demoralized organized labor for over a decade.

The war, the election debacle of 1919, and the failure of the 1920 strikes caused increasing tensions within the SFIO, the unified Socialist party created in 1905. The party leaders who had favored adhesion to the *union sacrée* throughout the war and a continuation of a reformist policy afterward had lost control of the party by 1918. The antiwar “reformers” now dominated the party and looked to the victorious Russian Bolsheviks for leadership. In July 1920, an SFIO delegation embarked for Moscow to apply for membership in the Third International, the Bolsheviks’ international organization. To their shock, they discovered that adhesion to the Communist movement would require acceptance of the “Twenty-One Conditions” formulated by the Russian Communist leaders, which implied a complete repudiation of the French party’s traditions of internal democracy.

At the SFIO’s Congress at Tours in December 1920, the Socialists split. A majority of the delegates to the congress voted to accept the “Twenty-One Conditions.” The newly formed French Communist party (PCF) kept control of the SFIO’s daily newspaper, *L’Humanité*. The socialists who refused to accept the vote followed Léon Blum, who promised to keep alive the spirit of the “old house” built by Jaurès. This group kept the old party name of the SFIO. Heavily outnumbered at the Congress of Tours, they nevertheless included most of the party’s delegation in the Chamber of Deputies and most of its permanent officials.

The Communists’ majority at the Congress of Tours was deceptive. Over the next few years, as the temporary burst of postwar revolutionary fervor faded, the SFIO succeeded in reestablishing itself as the larger of the two leftwing parties. But it was now less of a working-class party. Its rank and file and its votes were increasingly

drawn from lower-level white-collar groups, such as government employees and school-teachers. The PCF, repeatedly plunged into internal crisis by sudden shifts of leadership and policy imposed from Moscow, shrank during the 1920s to a small core of dedicated militants. Apart from a few regions where it picked up peasant backing, its strength was primarily in the factory suburbs of the “red belt” around Paris. The split of the socialists was followed by a division in the French trade union movement. There, the pro-Communist minority abandoned the CGT to form its own organization, the CGTU (*Confédération générale du travail unitaire*), in 1922. Together with the formation of a small Catholic labor movement, the CFTC (*Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens*) in 1919, the breakup of the CGT fragmented the union movement, which lost members steadily during the 1920s.

The Quest for Security

The divisions of the left allowed the *Bloc national* government to pursue the assertive foreign policy its leaders considered necessary to maintain France’s security after the war. On paper, France at the beginning of the 1920s was the world’s strongest military power. Even after the demobilization of most of the army in 1919, the country still had more men under arms than any other nation. The war and the Russian Revolution had at least temporarily eliminated Germany and Russia as military forces, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been permanently extinguished. A series of treaties with the newly created nations of central and eastern Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania—made France the patron of all those who had gained from the postwar treaties. The government encouraged French business investment in these countries to tie them even more closely to France.

The weakness of this activist policy was that France lacked the resources to sustain it. The fate of the Millerand government’s use of force to maintain all the clauses of the Versailles Treaty against Germany and force the Germans to make their reparations payments demonstrated this. The French, frustrated by the American demand that France repay its war debts to the United States even when the Germans failed to pay them the reparations they owed, decided to make a show of force. To end German footdragging, Raymond Poincaré, the former wartime president who was then premier, sent troops to occupy the Ruhr industrial district in northwestern Germany in January 1923. The Germans responded with a program of passive resistance, which the French tried to break by importing workers to put the Ruhr’s mines and factories back into operation, and by administrative measures to separate the occupied territory from the rest of Germany.

The French occupation, and the consequent runaway inflation in Germany, eventually forced the German government to the conference table. By then, however, Poincaré’s policy had shown itself expensive for France as well. The French deployment of colonial troops enabled the Germans to win sympathy in the United States and Britain by protesting the “horror” of black soldiers policing a white population. The Americans and British brought financial pressure on the French government, and French investors themselves speculated against the government. As a result, the French franc, already badly weakened as a result of the war, lost a further 46 percent of its value in the year following occupation of the Ruhr. France had to accept an international settlement of the reparations issues that had led to the crisis. It gained international guarantees that Germany would pay (thus partially achieving the goal Clemenceau had

sought at Versailles of ensuring that France's wartime allies would help keep Germany under control) in exchange for accepting a reduction in German obligations. More significantly, the Ruhr crisis showed that France lacked the power to impose its interpretation of the postwar settlement on the rest of Europe.

By 1924, nationalist hopes for a French-dominated Europe had been dashed not only by the outcome of the Ruhr crisis but by other developments as well. The success of German enterprises thwarted the ambitious postwar *plan sidérurgique* (metal-industry plan) to use the economic clauses of the Versailles Treaty to make the French iron and steel industry dominant in the European market. In the military arena, the French generals had opted for Marshal Pétain's cautious defensive strategy in any future war with Germany, rather than for Marshal Foch's plan to punish any future German aggression by a swift advance onto enemy territory. Even before the 1924 elections brought the left back to power, French leaders were recognizing that the country's ability to control international affairs was more limited than it had appeared in the immediate aftermath of the war.

The Briand Years

Having learned from the failure of their go-it-alone tactics in 1919, the Socialists agreed to an electoral pact with their traditional republican allies, the Radicals, in 1924. This *Cartel des Gauches* won 353 of the 610 seats in the Chamber. In domestic affairs, the ministry of the Radical leader Edouard Herriot was to suffer a resounding defeat. But by the time it fell in 1926, the *Cartel* government had redefined French foreign policy along lines that were to last well into the next decade.

The new course adopted in 1924 came to be identified with the name of the veteran politician Aristide Briand, who headed the Foreign Ministry from 1925 to 1932. Abandoning the policy of rigor toward Germany, Herriot and Briand sought to protect French interests by favoring international reconciliation and promoting a rapprochement with Germany. The French became leading proponents of strengthening the League of Nations, hoping that a larger international structure could contain German tendencies toward militarism. In 1925, Briand accepted the German foreign minister Stresemann's suggestion of a treaty between Germany and its western neighbors guaranteeing their mutual frontiers. This Locarno Pact, an agreement among equals rather than a peace dictated to the defeated, seemed to promise a new era of peace for Europe, although the small states of eastern and central Europe—to which France had pledged protection—expressed concern that it included no assurances about German respect for their borders. In 1926, Germany joined the League of Nations, and Briand hailed the coming of a new international order. "Make way, rifles, machine-guns, cannon! Make place for conciliation, arbitration, and peace!"² Briand, by now internationally known as "the pilgrim of peace," lent his name to the Kellogg-Briand Treaty of 1928, by which the United States and France agreed to renounce the use of war in settling international differences. In following years, numerous other countries added their signatures to it. France, the country that had demanded the harshest terms toward Germany during the 1919 negotiations, had now become the leader of the movement to banish violence from international affairs.

In the wake of the Locarno Pact, France and Germany resolved their economic differences. An International Steel Agreement of 1926 consecrated the German lead in the steel industry, but guaranteed French producers 32 percent of the European market.

Numerous groups promoted youth exchanges between the two countries. Leading French intellectuals participated in programs to spread acquaintance with German literature and thought. In 1929, France joined Germany and the other wartime powers in negotiations linking disarmament and German reparations. This led to the Young Plan, by which the Allies agreed to hasten the end of military occupation in Germany. From the French point of view, the most important aspect of the agreement was that the United States finally accepted the principle of a link between German reparations payments and French war debts. Briand's initiatives, culminating in a proposal for a European federation launched in September 1929, foreshadowed the successful process of western European integration undertaken in the 1950s. Tragically, just as Briand was suggesting the unification of Europe, Adolf Hitler began his rise to power in Germany. A quarter-century of catastrophes was to intervene before the initiatives of the late 1920s could bear fruit.

Colonialism in the Interwar Era

The interwar period was both the high point of the French colonial empire and the time when the forces that would break it up after the Second World War began to manifest themselves. The war had shown the value of the colonies, which had aided France with men and resources, and the peace settlement had awarded France new territories in Africa and the Middle East. The disruptions of the postwar period reduced international trade, and, as a result, the protected markets of France's colonies assumed a new economic significance. Exchanges with the colonies, 13 percent of France's overall commerce in 1913, grew to 33 percent in 1933, although most trade and investment was confined to North Africa and Indochina. Advertising images like the grinning, pop-eyed Senegalese soldier—the trademark of Banania, a popular children's breakfast drink—reinforced racial stereotypes, but they also made the empire a familiar presence in French homes. Except for the small and unpopular Communist party, all political movements in the country supported the Empire. The 1931 Colonial Exposition in Paris, like the prewar world's fairs, attracted large crowds and encouraged visitors to identify with the "greater France" whose diverse peoples it displayed. (The exposition's main building, in the Bois de Vincennes, has now been repurposed to house a museum of immigration.) Inaugurating the exposition, the minister of colonies Paul Reynaud reminded the public that metropolitan France was only 1/23rd of the Empire's geographic territory. Although the exposition emphasized the artistic achievements of non-European cultures, exhibits of advanced French technology being used overseas, such as aviation, underlined the notion that France was still the source of all progress for its colonial territories.

Whereas the French public had come to take the colonies for granted, those who had to administer them found the task ever more complicated in the postwar period. Prewar optimism that France's republican values could easily be exported diminished as the years went on. Postwar French governments had less money to invest in the colonies, and ambitious schemes to replace traditional local leaders with French officials had to give way to an increased reliance on existing hierarchies, even if this meant abandoning the republican principle of social equality. Ironically, as the French became more familiar with the populations of their overseas territories, they became less confident of their mission to transform them. The ethnographic studies of Maurice Delafosse, the first great French expert on West Africa, revealed the richness and variety of the area's

cultures. Delafosse supported colonialism and taught many of the administrators who were sent to govern the area, but his lessons raised doubts about the possibility or desirability of implanting French customs in such alien societies. French journalists, encouraged to visit the colonies to report on their progress, often wound up instead denouncing the harsh treatment of native peoples.

The greatest threat to the French empire, however, came from changing attitudes among the colonial populations themselves. The war had exposed them to heady rhetoric about democracy, national self-determination, and communist revolution. In their efforts to rally support from the colonies, French leaders themselves had made vague but alluring promises about increased rights for their populations. By the 1920s, there was a growing elite of so-called *évolués* in the colonies, who had received a French-style education. The first postwar governor of French West Africa warned that:

the ideas of emancipation ... are obviously destined to create illusions among the young educated blacks ... and to incite them to dream of aspiring for themselves, to the exclusion of any foreign element, the role of educators and leaders of the indigenous societies.³

Discontent with French policies did not always translate into calls for independence: in many cases, the initial demand of these educated elites was for France to keep the promises inherent in its own rhetoric, which would give them increased legal and political rights and access to better jobs. When these demands were not met, however, members of the *évolué* groups began turning to nationalism and sometimes to communist ideas. The largest anticolonial revolt of the 1920s, Abd-el-Krim's rebellion in Morocco, could still be seen as a traditionalist attempt to drive out foreign occupiers, but the Yen Bay insurrection in Vietnam in 1930 to 1931 was organized by a movement that used the language of modern nationalism. In both cases, the French response was thoroughgoing repression, which strengthened resentment against their rule.

Domestic Politics in the 1920s

The reorientation of French foreign policy was the most lasting legacy of the *Cartel des Gauches* victory in the 1924 elections. In domestic affairs the two years of the *Cartel*, from 1924 to 1926, proved to be an unhappy experiment that suggested France's parliamentary institutions were becoming increasingly unworkable. The centrist ministry of Raymond Poincaré, who held office from 1926 to 1929, appeared to demonstrate, on the other hand, that the Third Republic could still pull itself out of political crises it periodically plunged into, as it had after Boulanger, the Dreyfus affair, and during the war. But Poincaré's term of office was the last time the regime was able to demonstrate such resiliency.

In domestic politics, the *Bloc national* governments had not only strongly repressed the revolutionary upsurge of 1920, but had reached out to conservatives with policies that broke with the prewar republican tradition. The wartime experience had tempered the hostility between Catholics and nonbelievers, as members of both groups fought side by side to defend the country. From 1920 to 1924, the government gave Catholics satisfaction on several controversial issues. It tolerated the activities of Catholic religious orders that had been officially expelled from the country in 1901. In the

recovered territories of Alsace and Lorraine, where the Separation Law of 1905 had never been applied, the 1801 Concordat was left in force as it had been during the German period. And in 1921, France reestablished diplomatic relations with the Vatican. With these measures, most of the gulf between the regime and its Catholic citizens was finally closed. The Republic no longer appeared as the agent of a militant anti-Catholic crusade, and Catholics in turn largely ceased to agitate for changes in the arrangements set up by the 1905 law.

The ministries of the 1920 to 1924 period were much less successful in dealing with another thorny problem, the reestablishment of France's public finances. The inflation spawned by the war had shocked a society accustomed to a currency (the "germinal franc" established by Napoleon in 1803) whose value had remained stable for over a century. To prevent the franc from losing its value, France had to borrow heavily abroad. The threat of withdrawal of these foreign loans was one of the major reasons Poincaré had to abandon occupation of the Rhineland in 1924. As part of this shift in policy, the conservative Poincaré was able to obtain new loans and shore up the franc in 1924, but his successor, Herriot, faced quite a different situation.

The 1924 election had seen the triumph of the left, but the government it produced had a shaky parliamentary base. Léon Blum's party adhered rigidly to the policy laid down at the time of the party's founding in 1905. Socialists would not accept ministerial offices in a government dominated by a "bourgeois" party. They would only support a Radical government as long as its policies were in accord with the Socialists' own program. The small businessmen and peasants who made up most of Herriot's own electorate responded to the Radicals' traditional attacks on the selfishness of the rich. But they had no sympathy for the measures restricting private property advocated by the Socialists. The *Cartel* government thus had very limited room to maneuver. Herriot added to his problems by proposing to undo the concessions made to the Catholics between 1920 and 1924. In response, Catholic leaders organized a broad-based protest movement whose demonstrations attracted tens of thousands of followers. The success of this movement against the government's religious policy encouraged conservatives to resist its fiscal measures as well.

The left's apparent domination of the government after 1924 also inspired a resurgence of antiparliamentary, antidemocratic spirit on the far right, where some militants openly expressed their admiration for the way in which Benito Mussolini's Fascist movement had overthrown Italian democracy and implanted a dictatorial regime after 1922. The *Action française*, the most important of the surviving prewar rightwing leagues, remained active. But it faced competition from newly founded groups that found Maurras's organization too intellectual and insufficiently activist. Georges Valois's *Faisceau*, founded in 1925, borrowed its name and much of its symbolism from the Italian Fascists, as well as its pretension to synthesize ultraconservatism and syndicalism. The wealthy industrialist Pierre Taittinger bankrolled the *Jeunesse patriotes*, which imitated Mussolini's appeal to youth against a parliamentary regime dominated by old men. This "first wave" of French Fascist organizations failed to attract much of a following, however. The *Action française* in particular suffered a major setback in 1926 when Pope Pius XI officially condemned the movement for its violation of basic religious values. The papal declaration weakened the tight bond that had connected Catholic faith and rightwing political extremism. Some Catholic intellectuals began to argue that religious faith did not automatically entail the rejection of democratic and even socialist ideas.

The mid-1920s also saw the transformation of the French Communist party into a centralized and bureaucratically controlled organization modeled after the Soviet Communist party, and largely subservient to policy directives from Moscow. The PCF's opposition to occupation of the Ruhr had led to a repressive campaign against it, which hardened the remaining members' loyalty to the organization. Its agitation against the Herriot government's effort to maintain French colonial rule in Morocco by defeating the revolt led by Abd-el-Krim served to keep it at odds with the rest of the French political world. In 1927, the Soviets ordered the French party to adopt a policy of rigid opposition to the SFIO, extended even to voting against Socialist candidates on the second ballot in the 1928 elections. This was a violation of the strong French tradition of "republican discipline" by which the left-of-center parties aided each other against conservatives. This "class versus class" policy angered the Socialists and even many of the Communists' own voters, and kept the PCF demoralized and isolated.

In the 1920s, extremism of both the right and the left appeared to be only a minor challenge to the established political parties. But the winners of the 1924 elections had other problems of their own. The *Cartel* government was brought down by its inability to manage the nation's finances. By the spring of 1925, Herriot, the Radical premier, had had to exceed the legal limit for government borrowing from the privately run Bank of France. His Socialist allies' program for resolving the financial crisis—a tax on the savings and investments of the wealthy—was unacceptable both to his own supporters and to the country's conservative financial circles. Herriot's government fell over this fiscal crisis in April 1925, but his successors had equally little success in coming up with a plan that would reconcile leftwing voters and rightwing bankers, and the value of the franc began to drop with ever-increasing speed. The president, Gaston Doumergue, finally offered the premiership to the conservative Raymond Poincaré, who succeeded in winning support from enough Radical deputies to break up the *Cartel* majority.

Poincaré and Financial Stabilization

Although he represented the conservatives who had lost the elections in 1924, a majority of the French public looked to Poincaré, who had "saved" the franc in 1924, as the only man capable of resolving the fiscal crisis. Poincaré demanded power to bypass the regular workings of the parliamentary system. The Chamber, aware of its own inability to resolve controversial issues, voted him the right to issue laws by decree. Although this was in one sense another example of the Third Republic's ability to meet crises, in another sense it was an admission that institutions created in 1875 were no longer sufficient to deal with the complex problems of the postwar world.

Personally popular with much of the French public—the voters gave him and his conservative coalition a strong endorsement in the 1928 elections—Poincaré was able to take measures to resolve the crisis that had paralyzed the *Cartel* government. In the course of his three years in office, Poincaré put through a number of important reforms. His government broadened access to the educational system by making secondary education tuition-free, and it passed France's first comprehensive social security law in 1928, providing a safety net of medical insurance and pensions for France's poorer citizens. But Poincaré's main achievement was to restabilize public finances. He pushed through a tax increase and trimmed government spending to reduce the budget deficit. Many of his supporters still hoped that Poincaré would somehow bring the franc back

to its “true” value (the level of 1914), but by 1928 he had decided that the wisest policy was to accept that the cost of the war had entailed a permanent decline in the currency’s value. The monetary law of June 1928 set the franc’s value in gold at 20 percent of the prewar level. Poincaré’s measure represented an acceptance that much of the war’s cost would have to be borne by France’s savers, rich and poor, but it kept alive another illusion, namely the belief that France had finally come to the end of the period of troubles that had begun in 1914.

Notes

- 1 Raoul Girardet, “L’Ombre de la guerre,” in Pierre Nora, ed., *Essais d’ego-histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 139.
- 2 Cited in René Girault and Robert Frank, *Turbulente Europe et nouveaux mondes* (Paris: Masson, 1981), 148.
- 3 Cited in Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 190.

25 The Illusion of Normality

By the mid-1920s, France seemed to have recovered from the most immediate effects of the war. The country was once again enjoying prosperity and economic growth. Even when the American stock market crash of 1929 pushed much of the world into a severe economic crisis, France appeared largely immune.

Economic Recovery

The periodic newspaper headlines about the crisis of the franc during the 1920s gave a misleading impression about the state of the French economy in the postwar decade. In fact, as Raymond Poincaré recognized when he officially abandoned efforts to restore the currency to its prewar level in 1928, inflation and currency devaluation actually aided economic growth by reducing debts incurred by investors and making French products cheaper on foreign markets. France not only shared in the general surge of prosperity in the western world from 1924 to 1929, but, according to many statistical measures, for the first time since the start of the industrial revolution, the country outpaced its rivals in terms of industrial growth. France's performance in the 1920s demonstrated that the economic development of the *belle époque* years had not been a fluke; it was a prelude to the even more impressive growth of the 1950s and 1960s.

The first few years after the armistice were difficult ones in France as in the rest of the world. Social unrest, the need to convert factories from war production to civilian goods, and the problem of reintegrating the millions of demobilized soldiers into the workforce all caused economic disruption. Industrial production in 1919 was only 57 percent of its level in 1913, the last prewar year. By 1924, however, the industrial economy had significantly surpassed the prewar level. In 1929, on the eve of the worldwide economic crisis, the production index stood at 140. There were several reasons behind this economic upsurge. The postwar French government spent heavily to rebuild damaged areas of the north, and to put up new public buildings—schools, post offices, town halls—throughout the country. At Versailles, the French had negotiated for treaty provisions intended to promote the country's economic interests, and these were not totally without effect. From 1922 to 1928, France enjoyed a positive trade balance with Germany, a rare phenomenon in the two countries' relations. Through the 1920s, France's colonial empire provided a profitable captive market that helped to promote the country's prosperity.

As in the prewar period, the most technologically advanced sectors of the French economy led its growth. Iron and steel production expanded and modernized so that by

1929 France had, for the first time since the beginning of the industrial revolution 150 years earlier, reached the level of Britain. Growth in iron production resulted in a corresponding expansion of coal mining. Much of the country's iron and steel production went to the large factories of the fast-growing manufacturing sector. In 1929, the French automobile industry turned out 254,000 cars, making it the second largest in the world. (That status admittedly meant little in the face of the American industry's output of 5,300,000 vehicles per year.) The electrical industry also underwent dramatic expansion, exploiting the hydropower resources of the Alps and benefiting from government promotion of rural electrification. The domestic consumer market grew as middle-class households began to acquire an increasing number of factory-made products, such as kitchen appliances and radios. Advertising became more pervasive and more imaginative.

The modernization of some parts of the French economy was often seen as part of a phenomenon of "Americanization," the penetration into France of production methods and values pioneered in the United States. The expansion of American influence as a result of the First World War and the tremendous growth of its economy made this a major issue for the first time. French commentators coined the words *fordisme*, to refer to the assembly-line methods copied from Henry Ford's auto factories, and *taylorisme*, in honor of American efficiency expert F. W. Taylor's time-and-motion studies aimed at raising worker productivity. Forward-looking industrialists, such as the owners of the Michelin tire company, were eager to show that they were keeping France competitive by adopting these new techniques. Intellectuals were more critical of American influence. Georges Duhamel's popular book, *America the Menace: Scenes from the Life of the Future*, articulated an image of America that has resurfaced repeatedly in France ever since. According to Duhamel, the United States was a soulless, mechanistic society, in which profit and efficiency were the only values. "What strikes the European traveler," Duhamel wrote, "is the progressive approximation of human life to what we know of the way of life of insects—the same effacement of the individual, the same progressive reduction and unification of social types."¹

American models also had an impact on mass culture, which became increasingly associated with the electronic media. The French film industry suffered badly during and after the war, losing its initial supremacy to American silent film producers. But the introduction of talking films after 1927 and controls on the number of imports allowed it to revive during the 1930s. Mass culture penetrated the home via the increasing popularity of radio. Regular broadcasting had begun in 1922. The annual Tour de France bicycle race was broadcast on radio for the first time in 1929, adding to the popularity of this distinctively French spectacle, which had been initiated in 1903 by a sports magazine.

As in the prewar years, however, French economic development continued to follow a pattern in which—to a much greater extent than in other industrial nations—traditional sectors of the economy persisted alongside more modern ones. The rural economy was the most important example. Despite the losses of the war, the rural population diminished only slowly during the 1920s, and agricultural methods were not improved. France's millions of small family farms continued to consume much of their own production, and to provide only a modest market for the country's urban industries. Through a generous tax policy and other measures, the governments of the 1920s also protected small shops and family businesses that might have been squeezed out if larger enterprises had been allowed to take full advantage of their opportunities.

Postwar Society and Culture

The economic growth of the 1920s thus did not threaten the position of major groups that had formed the social base of the Third Republic since its establishment: the business classes, large and small; the landowning peasantry; and civil servants. The more humble strata of these groups were especially strongly represented in the numerous army veterans' organizations, which formed one of the most important social movements of the interwar decades. Originally concerned with obtaining proper compensation for the war-wounded and pensions for ex-soldiers, the veterans' organizations (which enrolled over 3 million members at their peak and far outnumbered political parties and trade unions of the period) represented the values of middle-class and peasant republicanism. Although their spokesmen reiterated that the war had been a necessary and patriotic endeavor, they were profoundly pacifist and sympathetic to Briand's conciliatory foreign policy. The mass veterans' movements rejected political extremism and, indeed, condemned conventional politics of all sorts, which they blamed for dividing the country. They argued that France's democratic society had provided the forces that won the war and that it therefore deserved to be preserved from either social revolution or transformations that unbridled capitalist development might bring about.

Veterans' groups were among those involved in the construction of a national memory of the war in which they had fought. That the war and those who fought it needed to be memorialized was recognized even before the fighting ended. With government encouragement, virtually every French community built a war monument in the decade after the Armistice, in addition to the large collective memorials built at Verdun and other battlefields and the tomb of the Unknown Soldier that was placed under the Arc of Triumph in Paris. Opinion was split, however, on whether the fallen soldiers should be remembered as heroes or victims, and on how to recognize the contributions of those, such as women, who had not fought at the front. Despite these disagreements, the ubiquitous war memorials served to create a common memory throughout the country.

The lessons of the war were a common theme in the writings of the extraordinarily influential newspaper columnist and philosopher Emile Chartrier, known as "Alain," who reached the peak of his fame after the war. Alain spoke for much of French society in his rejection of the all-powerful state and his defense of individual freedom. He urged his readers to be suspicious of all politicians and he considered the war to have been the ultimate proof of the stupidity inherent in organized political activity. If one had to attend a patriotic ceremony, he wrote in the early 1920s, "think of those blinded in the fighting, that cools the passions." Even the unbridled pursuit of economic progress struck Alain, the proponent of France's traditional society and its economy on a human scale, as misguided. "No, production is not an end in itself; a worthwhile life for everyone is the goal, the free individual is the goal."²

Immigrant Factory Workers

The industrial proletariat remained largely excluded from the organized veterans' movement, although large numbers of workers had certainly served in the war. And it was the working class that was most affected by economic changes of the 1920s. In fact, some historians talk of a new working class, quite different from the French

workers of the 1890s. A good part of the working class was new because it consisted of immigrant laborers, 2 million of whom were recruited between 1921 and 1931, and of women. Both groups were generally employed in jobs classified as unskilled labor, and paid less than native French men. Immigrants were concentrated in certain sectors, such as mining, where they made up 42 percent of the labor force in 1930. “Outside the main gate,” a visitor to the big Renault auto factory in the Paris suburb of Boulogne-Billancourt wrote in 1928, “a stall offers Armenian, Romanian, Czech, Hungarian newspapers, those from Vienna and Berlin, Italy and Spain.”³ A generous naturalization law passed in 1927 offered immigrants from European countries the opportunity to apply for citizenship after just three years of residence. Workers from the French colonies were treated more harshly. Even when they lived in the metropole, they were subject to the arbitrary provisions of the *indigénat* code, which prevented them from joining unions or bringing complaints against their employers.

Around these new factories grew up new communities, such as the “red belt” of dreary suburbs surrounding Paris. Here, workers, uprooted from their homes in rural France or abroad, lived in physical isolation from the rest of society in hastily and shoddily constructed apartment blocks and small houses. Significantly, the Paris subway system, begun around the turn of the century and greatly expanded between the wars, did not penetrate into these communities until the 1970s. Cut off from the rest of French life, the inhabitants of these working-class communities did not share in the prosperity of the 1920s. Average salaries rose only slowly during this period, not enough to make any significant improvement in living conditions. The Communist party found its strongest base in these areas. The CGT, dominated by unions of relatively well-off public service employees, had less attraction for these new factory workers. Only the impact of the depression in the 1930s and the upsurge of the Popular Front would allow them to find effective forms of mass organization and make their voice heard in the rest of French society.

The Avant-Garde

While workers toiled in “Americanized” factories, those who were better off danced to the rhythm of American jazz bands. The vogue for the new American music, and for stars like the “exotic” African American dancer Josephine Baker, came to symbolize a revolt against the conventional culture and lifestyle of prewar bourgeois France. Victor Margueritte’s best-selling novel, *La Garçonne (The Bachelor Girl)*, depicted the world of the jazz decade: corrupt, dissipated, avid for money, open to cultural experiments, and awash in alcohol and drugs. Only a tiny fraction of the population actually lived anything like the life *La Garçonne* portrayed, but some of Margueritte’s themes evoked changes that, in less exaggerated form, affected larger parts of French society. Paris remained one of the world’s great cultural centers. During the 1920s, it was home to a dazzling collection of foreign writers and artists, who found in *la ville lumière* a sense of freedom and excitement they missed at home. James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, exiled Russian intellectuals fleeing the Communist regime, and many others were among them.

Along with expatriates from foreign countries, Paris was a gathering point for educated elites from the French colonies. Thanks to the more liberal laws in the metropole and the sympathy they received from critics of colonialism, these exiles were often ahead of their compatriots back home in adopting new ideas and organizing

protest movements. In 1927 Paris, a young Algerian, Messali Hadj, created the first movement for the independence of his country, the *Etoile Nord-Africaine*, recruiting followers among immigrant workers. Paris was also the birthplace of the cultural movement known as *négritude*, which grew out of encounters between black people from the various French colonies and African American expatriates who transmitted the influence of Marcus Garvey's pan-African movement and the "Harlem Renaissance" of the 1920s. The leaders of the *négritude* movement, Aimé Césaire from Martinique and Léopold Sedar Senghor from Senegal, argued that people of African descent all shared a common culture, distinct from that of Europe. African civilization, Senghor claimed, had "the gift of emotion and the gift of sympathy, the gift of rhythm and of form, the gift of images and the gift of myth, a communitarian and democratic spirit ..." ⁴ Although Césaire and Senghor both made political careers in the French system, their writings helped inspire a new self-consciousness in black colonial populations.

The postwar decade was a lively one for French culture. The publication of Marcel Proust's masterpiece, *A La Recherche du Temps perdu*, the first volume of which had appeared just before the war, was completed in 1927, five years after its author's death. Proust's meditation on the distorting and creative power of memory continued some of the antirationalist trends of the prewar period. His complex, multilayered prose immediately established his work as a literary classic. Proust's novel featured homosexual characters, but the author avoided any reference to his own sexual orientation. André Gide went further in 1924 with the publication of his autobiographical *Si le grain ne meurt*, and a book of essays, *Corydon*. His memoir explicitly discussed his homosexual awakening in prewar Morocco, and *Corydon* argued that homosexuality had been a part of civilization since Greek times.

The self-consciously avant-garde Surrealist movement, which attracted a number of artists and poets, took the prewar exploration of the unconscious and the irrational to new lengths. The poet André Breton, one of the group's main spokesmen, announced their intention to liberate the imagination by such techniques as "automatic writing" in which the author sought to put words on paper without subjecting them to any conscious shaping. In music, the most creative endeavors were those of "Les Six," a loose group of young composers (best known today are Darius Milhaud and François Poulenc) who brought to France the new atonal style pioneered before the war by the Austrian Schoenberg and the Russian Stravinsky. The period saw an important renewal of French theater, and the leading painters of the prewar avant-garde, such as Picasso and Matisse, continued to make new stylistic breakthroughs. Continuing the cubist tradition, Fernand Léger used machinelike shapes to create an art linked to the cult of industrial modernism, while Yves Tanguy's dreamlike landscapes reflected the influence of Surrealism.

Women's Roles

Victor Margueritte's *La Garçonne* reflected not only the period's interest in cultural experimentation but also its concern with new roles being adopted by women. Margueritte himself was a strong supporter of women's emancipation. His subsequent writings included a book advocating the right to abortion. His heroine, Monique, was an emancipated woman who lived a life as independent as that of any man—adopting the short skirts and close-cropped hair that were symbols of the new female freedom,

and taking her sexual pleasure wherever she found it. But Monique—artistic creator and successful businesswoman—was hardly typical of the average French woman of the period. Even the period’s major feminist movements continued to uphold conventional sexual morality. Radicals like Nelly Roussel, the birth-control campaigner, and Madeleine Pelletier, who dressed in men’s clothing, were isolated figures.

The outbreak of war in 1914 had interrupted a campaign for women’s suffrage that had been gaining increasing support. At the end of the conflict, women’s groups thought that the important contributions women had made to the war effort and the granting of voting rights to women in other major countries, including Britain, Germany, the United States, and Russia, would lead to similar action in France. Because they expected women to vote primarily for conservative causes, the Catholic church and even Charles Maurras, the leader of the extremist *Action française*, supported this idea. The Chamber of Deputies actually passed a suffrage law in May 1919, only to see it blocked in the Senate in 1922. Conservative backing for women’s suffrage led many senators from the Radical Party to oppose the law; they feared that women would not support republican institutions. In addition, there were objections to granting women the vote because it would make them the majority of the electorate, since so many men had been killed in the war.

Women’s groups continued to campaign for voting rights throughout the interwar period, pointing out, for example, that Joan of Arc had saved France in the 1400s but that she would have been barred from voting for a local city councilor in the 1920s. The Chamber of Deputies voted for several suffrage laws, but the Senate continued to block all action on the issue. Nevertheless, the expressions of support for women’s suffrage in the Chamber convinced feminists that the Republic would eventually see the justice of their cause and discouraged them from adopting more militant tactics. Although women were barred from voting, they were able to influence public life in a number of ways. Women played a leading role in the pacifist groups that were among the most important public associations of the period. Twenty different women’s peace groups were created during the 1920s. Women also had leading roles in the gradual expansion of social-welfare institutions that took place in the interwar years. Social services during this period were provided by a mixture of public and private agencies, and women philanthropists and social workers often had prominent positions in them.

The war itself made it inevitable that more women would have to live independent lives, since the heavy casualties suffered by the male population left the country with a permanent surplus of women. Even women whose husbands had survived often faced new challenges at home. As one wife wrote to an advice columnist in November 1918, during the war, “I learned to live and think on my own. I arranged my life according to my preferences, which, I see now, are not always those of my husband ... What will my husband say when he comes back?”⁵ Many women’s husbands came home disfigured or disabled; even those who had not suffered physical injuries often could not sleep at night, and some had lost their ability to function sexually. The difficulties couples had to readjusting to postwar life resulted in an increase in the divorce rate that lasted throughout the interwar years.

Conscious of the contribution they had made during the war, women expressed growing dissatisfaction with the limited curriculum of girls’ secondary schools set up at the beginning of the Third Republic and demanded access to a course of study identical with that offered to boys. In 1924, women were allowed to take the same *baccalauréat* exam as the men, giving them increased access to higher education. The number of

professional women grew; women lawyers, with their experience in public speaking, played a prominent role in feminist organizations. Women school-teachers obtained pay and privileges equal to men in 1919, and similar provisions were put in place in other parts of the civil service in the course of the 1920s, although women were often barred from positions above a certain level. Private employers were less willing to equalize men's and women's salaries, however. After the war, many firms began giving family bonuses to married men with children, a strategy that was meant both to increase the population and to make the recipients more loyal to their employers. The family bonus system was taken over by the government and extended to all workplaces in 1932. While they rewarded men for supporting their families, employers encouraged mothers to give up their jobs when they had children. Paternalist employers often also required women whose husbands received family bonuses to allow social workers to visit their homes and make sure that they were raising their children properly.

Although women gained more access to education and some forms of employment, legislation restricted their sexual freedom. In 1920, driven by concerns about the country's low birth rate and by a reaction against the changes in traditional sex roles that had occurred during the war, the conservative *Bloc national* passed a draconian law that not only prohibited abortion but also outlawed any dissemination of birth-control information and the sale of contraceptive devices other than male condoms. (This exception was justified on the grounds that men needed to be able to protect themselves from venereal disease.) Even the mainstream women's groups supported this law. Their leaders—mostly middle-class married women—accepted the patriotic argument that national strength required a larger population. They also feared that objections on their part would weaken support for women's suffrage and other reforms they favored. The development of Catholic women's groups in the 1920s represented a broadening of the women's movement, which had traditionally been dominated by secular movements, but the Catholic organizations added strength to the opposition to abortion and birth control. The 1920 law had little effect on the birth rate, which remained low, and illegal abortions were common, but it emphasized the sharp difference between women's and men's positions in French society. Concern about the birth rate did lead to a 1927 law permitting women who married foreign nationals to keep their French citizenship and also pass it on to their children. Parallel to rationalization of the workplace, French women were urged to accept medical control of such basic functions as childbirth and to adopt scientific principles of management in their homes. The percentage of Parisian babies born in clinics rose from 34 in 1920 to 68 in 1939, while home births dropped from 42 to 8 percent. Paulette Bernège's *On the Household System* (1928) became a standard guide to the efficient performance of household tasks. Other literature taught mothers how to provide a hygienic environment for their children, contributing to a continued decline in infant mortality.

The Descent into the Depression

As the 1920s neared their end, both France and the wider world appeared to have overcome much of the trauma of the Great War. It is true that the picture was not an unclouded one. Economic prosperity was not universal. Britain suffered from depression throughout most of the period, for example, and many of the new nations of eastern and central Europe had never overcome the difficulties of their new situation.

But democracy still had solid foundations in France; and in Germany the new institutions of the Weimar Republic seemed to have taken hold. Certainly no one in France in 1929 could have known that the country was headed for a grave economic setback and a period of political divisions worse than at any previous point since the foundation of the Third Republic.

For the world at large, the year 1929 was marked by the crash of the American stock market and the deep economic depression that followed. The American economic collapse had immediate repercussions in many other countries, most notably in Germany, where the sharp rise in unemployment that it caused gave Adolf Hitler's Nazi movement the opportunity to start its rise to power. Initially, however, France seemed to enjoy a certain immunity to the depression's effects. Less dependent on export markets than the Germans, French manufacturers remained protected behind high tariff walls. For a time, French politicians and businessmen smugly asserted the fate of more industrialized countries like the United States proved "that French methods, often middling but always prudent, are best."⁶ They argued that France's balanced economy, with its large peasant sector, was cushioned against massive shocks.

By the beginning of 1931, however, the depression had arrived in France. In statistical terms, it was less severe than in the hardest-hit countries. The percentage of unemployed French was kept low because employers who had recruited workers from abroad were sometimes able to send them back to their home countries, and because many French workers from rural origins returned to their native farms to eke out a living.

The depression was most severe for the more technologically advanced sectors of the economy. In 1934, the automobile manufacturer Citroën, known for the introduction of new design ideas, had to declare bankruptcy. The less modern sectors of France's dual economy, those who had been slower to invest in new machinery in the 1920s, survived better. Manufacturers turned inward, away from a world market shrunken by protectionist policies of major governments, and relied on cartel agreements to prevent more efficient producers from driving out their domestic competitors. The colonies provided an outlet for French products, although manufacturers also had to buy colonial products at prices higher than world market levels. Some struggling enterprises were forced to turn to the state for aid. After a decade in which the French government had renounced the direct engagement with the economy it had practiced during the war years, its role began to grow, albeit in a piecemeal fashion. In 1933, the country's troubled private air transport companies were forced to merge into a single enterprise, Air France, with the government as minority stockholder. But there was no overall economic plan to combat the depression, and the slowdown remained persistent.

Poincaré had led a moderate and conservative coalition to victory in the 1928 elections, and it was left to his conservative successors to make the first efforts to combat the depression. Their policies, governed by strict economic orthodoxy, were uniformly unsuccessful. Higher tariffs were ineffective since consumers lacked money to spend, and measures designed to protect small businesses by allowing them to maintain high prices also reduced consumption. The government's dedicated defense of the franc's new value, established in 1928, made French goods more expensive on the world market when other governments devalued their currencies. To avoid budget deficits, the government reduced public employees' salaries, thereby reducing consumer demand even more. By the time of the 1932 elections, the voters were ready for

a change. As in 1924, the Radicals and the SFIO formed an electoral alliance and made substantial gains. But the Radical leader Edouard Herriot was as unsuccessful in combating the depression as he had been in controlling inflation in 1924 to 1925. The Socialists' continued refusal to participate directly in the government weakened the left, and made a drift toward the right almost unavoidable.

Critics of the Government and Society

As usual under the Third Republic, the prolonged period of political instability in the face of a crisis situation provoked a wave of criticism of the regime. Not all of it came from extremist groups bent on using the crisis to destroy the Republic. The early 1930s saw numerous reform proposals aimed at preserving the best qualities of the republican regime by making it more functional. The conservative leader André Tardieu, the group of young Radical party members known as the "Young Turks," and dissident members of the SFIO were among those who offered proposals to pull the system out of the doldrums. Despite the political differences among the reformers, there were certain common themes in their proposals. All agreed on the need for a stronger, more effective executive branch of government, less dependent on the whims of a parliament that was widely condemned as unrepresentative of the country at large. The regime's critics asserted that the parliamentary system was especially unsuited to dealing with the realities of a complex modern economy. There were many proposals for creation of institutions that would represent different branches of the economy, a tendency known as corporatism. Many critics called for some form of centralized economic planning, directed by the government, to ensure efficient use of resources. This technocratic current, reminiscent of the Saint-Simonian movement of the first half of the nineteenth century, attracted a number of managers and engineers.

The political party system, too, came in for severe criticism. Tardieu tried to unite the many conservative groups into a broad-based conservative party. Meanwhile, a prominent socialist, Marcel Déat, split from his party in 1933 and founded his own neosocialist group in opposition to the SFIO's dogmatic Marxism and its reluctance to cooperate with middle-class political movements. These "political nonconformists" of the early 1930s were often men destined to play prominent roles in the politics of the next few decades—some as wartime collaborationists, others as members of the Resistance and the postwar governments. At the time, however, their reform proposals shattered against political party divisions and the inertia of parliament, whose members were not inclined to support changes that would turn some of their powers over to unelected experts.

Although the intellectual debates of the period were not confined to politics, there was a strong tendency for writers and artists to turn from the concentration on personal problems characteristic of the 1920s to a preoccupation with public issues that seemed to have become so much more pressing. Emmanuel Mounier, one of the important intellectuals of the period, later described the generation that came of age after 1930 as "serious, solemn, occupied by difficulties, unsure of the future."⁷ Mounier himself was a participant in one of the most important intellectual developments of the period, the renewal of French Catholic thought. The papal condemnation of the *Action française* in 1926 had loosened the identification between religion and conservatism, and permitted a revival of the more democratic and socially concerned Catholicism associated with Marc Sangnier's *Sillon* movement at the turn of the

century. Mounier and other thinkers of the period, many of them Catholic, developed a doctrine they called “personalism,” which attempted to define a middle way between individualist liberalism and the collectivist doctrines of fascism and communism. They stressed the importance of the socially committed individual and of a morally structured common life. *Esprit*, the journal Mounier founded in 1932 to spread these ideas, was one of the most important publications of the period. Simone Weil, a brilliant young Jewish woman who became a Christian mystic, faulted the Communists for claiming to free people from the burden of work rather than helping them find meaning in it. She called for a society in which “the worker would know ... how his work fits into the factory’s production, and what place his factory occupies in the life of the society around it.”⁸

The Catholic novelist Georges Bernanos offered a different vision of personal commitment in his *Diary of a Country Priest*, published in 1936. It recounted a young clergyman’s struggles to affirm his faith in the face of a largely indifferent society. Politically, he was at opposite ends of the spectrum from André Malraux, whose novels also exemplified the literature of commitment. Malraux’s masterpiece, *Man’s Fate*, set in China during the revolutionary upheavals of the 1920s, was one of several works drawing liberally on the author’s own adventures. It told the dramatic story of the struggle and defeat of the Communist movement in Shanghai. The Spanish Civil War that began in 1936 inspired Malraux to an even more overtly political book, *Man’s Hope*, which glorified the leftwing forces in that bitter conflict. While Malraux identified with revolutionary movements, Jean Giraudoux’s popular 1935 play *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place* expressed a commitment to pacifism.

In the increasingly politicized atmosphere of the 1930s, not all leading writers identified with democratic or leftwing positions. Some of the most talented violently rejected what they saw as bankrupt humanitarian ideals, and turned to fascism or nihilism. The most troubling case was that of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, whose *Voyage to the End of the Night* (1932) and *Death on the Installment Plan* (1936) established him as perhaps the most creative user of the French language in the first half of the century. But his vehement detestation of what he saw as a rotten civilization expressed itself in denunciations of women, black and Jewish people, and all the conventional values of bourgeois society. Jean Giono’s pastoral novels of life in his native Provence, several of them made into successful movies, expressed a more traditional lament about the impact of modernity on small rural communities. The wide range of views among the period’s leading writers reflected the deepening cleavages in a society confronted with ever-more dramatic social and political issues.

The 1930s produced no striking new talents in the visual arts. The period foreshadowed the shift that would see Paris replaced by New York as the world’s center of innovation in painting and sculpture. But it was in some respects a golden age for the French cinema, whose best filmmakers revealed an independence of spirit that distinguished their work from the flood of American films. (These latter nevertheless remained extremely popular with French audiences.) Jean Vigo’s masterpieces, *Zéro de Conduite* and *L’Atalante*, expressed an anarchistic spirit that was too much for censors and commercial distributors. They were not seen in uncut versions until years later, when they became cult classics. Marcel Pagnol enjoyed great success with his sentimental trilogy of popular life in Marseille, *Marius*, *Fanny*, and *César*. Jean Renoir’s *Rules of the Game* (1939) dissected the emptiness of upper-class life with memorable images that made it an enduring classic.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Jean-Philippe Mathy, *Extreme-Occident: French Intellectuals and America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 59.
- 2 Cited in Georges Pascal, *Pour Connaitre la pensée d'Alain* (Paris: Bordas, 1957), 21, 192.
- 3 Cited in Gerard Noiriel, *Les Ouvriers dans la société française* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 151.
- 4 Cited in Raoul Girardet, *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris: La Table ronde, 1972), 249.
- 5 Cited in Dominique Fouchard, *Le poids de la guerre. Les poilus et leur famille après 1918* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 54.
- 6 Cited in Richard F. Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 93.
- 7 Cited in J.-L. Loubet Del Bayle, *Les Non-Conformistes des années 30* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 23.
- 8 Cited in M.-M. Davy, *Simone Weil* (Paris: PUF, 1966), 115.

26 From the Popular Front to the War

The Crisis of February 6, 1934

As the depression crisis deepened, extremist movements on the far right tried to exploit public frustration with the government's inability to end the economic downturn. After Italy in 1922 and Germany in 1933, France appeared vulnerable to a fascist takeover. Numerous would-be *Führers* competed for the chance to overthrow the country's parliamentary system. Peasants in some regions followed the agitator Henri Dorgères's Peasant Defense Committee, which instigated violent incidents to protest falling prices. Small businessmen supported the demagogic Taxpayers' League, which blamed the crisis on wasteful government spending. François Coty, a wealthy perfume manufacturer who had supported earlier Fascist groups in the 1920s, tried to gain power through the press. His *Ami du Peuple* shot up to a circulation of over 1 million by 1930. A retired army officer, François de la Rocque, headed the *Croix-de-Feu*, which started out as a veterans' group but grew into a broad-based conservative movement whose mass rallies and antiparliamentary slogans were uncomfortably reminiscent of Fascist movements in other European countries. Marcel Bucard's *Francistes* paraded in their blue shirts and made no secret of their desire to emulate Mussolini and Hitler.

The Radical ministry of Prime Minister Camille Chautemps was particularly vulnerable because of a recently exposed scandal. A financial swindler, Stavisky, had used his connection with some minor politicians from the governing Radical party to take control of the municipally owned bank in the small town of Bayonne and issue millions of francs of bonds in its name. The fact that Stavisky's lawyer was Chautemps's brother, and that he had succeeded in having legal proceedings against him postponed more than a dozen times, suggested that high-level Radical politicians had intervened on his behalf. When the swindler was found dead under mysterious circumstances in early 1934, the scandal became a national issue. The rightwing press strongly suggested that Stavisky had been killed to avoid revelations damaging to the Chautemps government. The government fell at the end of January.

On February 6, 1934, just after the formation of a new ministry, a broad assortment of rightwing groups called for mass demonstrations to converge on the Chamber of Deputies' meeting place (the Palais Bourbon) to protest parliamentary corruption. The Communists, equally antagonistic to the government, called for a simultaneous march of their own, as did the *Union Nationale des Combattants*, one of the largest veterans' movements. The result was a huge but uncoordinated crowd outside the parliament building. Some rightwing leaders undoubtedly hoped

to provoke a violent assault on the Palais Bourbon, while others, like de la Rocque's *Croix-de-Feu*, prudently kept their troops at a safe distance from the barricades. In the confusion, the beleaguered police finally opened fire on the demonstrators, killing 15 of them.

The uproar against the government's use of force on demonstrators, including wounded war veterans, led the Radical Prime Minister Edouard Daladier to resign. For the first time in Third Republic history, street agitation had brought down a government. To many observers, France seemed in real danger of sliding down the slope toward dictatorship. For the moment, the parliamentary right replaced the moderate left in power. Modern historians have tended to reject the belief, widespread at the time, that the riot on February 6, 1934, represented an organized attempt to overthrow parliamentary government and install a rightwing dictatorship. They point to the number of competing groups involved in the demonstration; the fact that many of them (particularly the *Croix-de-Feu*) showed no stomach for a fight; and the general acceptance of the moderate ministry formed by Gaston Doumergue after the riot, which remained loyal to the country's republican institutions. One area where anti-government agitation continued and even increased after February was Algeria. Support for far-right movements was strong among the European population, which was happy to incite Muslim anger against the region's Jewish minority. In August 1934, Muslim rioters killed 25 Jews in the city of Constantine while the police and local authorities failed to intervene.

The Popular Front

The most important difference between the situations in Italy and Germany and that in France in 1934 was that the rightwing agitation of February 6, 1934 provoked a broad union of leftwing forces that temporarily consolidated the democratic republic. On February 12, 1934, supporters of the two long-divided leftwing parties—the SFIO and the Communists—marched together in a demonstration against fascism called by the CGT trade union confederation. Although both parties' leaders had reservations about working together (the SFIO because the Communists had denounced it for years for treason to the working class, the Communists because they had since 1927 faithfully followed the official party line of making Socialists their main target), their followers clearly wanted to see the two groups cooperate. Local "unity committees" threatened to bypass the regular party structures and, by July 1934, with the Communists having received new instructions from Moscow to promote broad-based antifascist coalitions, the two parties agreed to work together.

The agreement between the SFIO and the PCF strengthened the left but, by themselves, they had no hope of winning a majority in the 1936 elections. The enlargement of the pact to include the Radicals seemed problematic in view of that party's commitment to defense of private property and small business interests that the Communists had always attacked. It was the Communists who reached out to the Radicals, however, abandoning many of their traditional positions, such as hostility to military expenditures. (The French Communists' surprising evolution on this issue reflected the Soviet dictator Stalin's preoccupation with the threat from Hitler, which had suddenly made a strong French army seem more attractive to him.) Local elections in May 1935 showed the

effectiveness of this broad-based *Rassemblement populaire* or, as it has come to be remembered, Popular Front. The massive Bastille Day parade of July 14, 1935, in Paris, sponsored by the three parties under the slogan “give the workers bread, give the young work, and give the world peace,” showed the strength of the movement. In January 1936, the three parties and several other smaller groups agreed on a common program, directed primarily against the country’s wealthy elite, the so-called “two hundred families” who were accused of prospering while the mass of population suffered through the depression. Alongside the parties, a broad spectrum of other groups devoted to peace, the democratization of culture, and other causes swept thousands of ordinary citizens into the movement. The tide of unity also swept the labor movement. The two rival federations that had fought each other since the Communists quit the CGT in 1922 reunited to form a single organization.

The looming Popular Front election victory and the prospect of a government headed by the Socialists’ Jewish leader Léon Blum, drove rightwing opponents to adopt the anti-semitic slogan “Better Hitler than Blum.” In February 1936, *Action française* militants beat up the Socialist leader so severely that he had to be temporarily hospitalized. But the Popular Front movement had developed too much momentum to be halted. Anticipation of a Popular Front victory paralyzed the existing government, and Hitler successfully defied the Versailles Treaty by remilitarizing the German Rhineland in March 1936, calculating correctly that the French would not respond. The May 1936 elections were, as expected, a sweeping triumph for the leftwing coalition parties. The SFIO came in ahead of the Radicals, for the first time achieving the status of the country’s largest party. Equally notable was the rise of the Communists, who obtained 15 percent of the vote.

For more than 40 years after its electoral breakthrough in 1936, the French Communist party would exercise a major influence on the life of the country. In many respects, the rise of the Communists seemed to be a new example of the familiar process by which new parties on the left had repeatedly replaced their predecessors, driving them toward the political center. The Communists differed from earlier leftwing parties, such as the republicans and the socialists, however, because they were part of a movement tightly controlled by a foreign government. The downfall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s has allowed historians to document how closely French Communist leader Maurice Thorez followed the instructions relayed by the Comintern, the Communists’ international organization. Furthermore, other French leftist parties governed themselves in a democratic fashion, whereas the Communist party was a totalitarian organization whose members had no real influence on its direction. Nevertheless, the policy of cooperation with other leftist parties that the Communists adopted in 1934 to 1935 attracted new constituencies, which were not exclusively proletarian, such as women and youth. The PCF now proclaimed its loyalty to democracy and embraced the traditional symbols of French republican patriotism, such as the “Marseillaise,” but even its Popular Front coalition partners remained wary of an organization capable of changing its orientation so rapidly and completely. Until the Communists’ decline in the 1980s, France faced the problem of how to deal with an organization that enjoyed too much popular support to be ignored but that never fully endorsed the values of parliamentary democracy.

Léon Blum

Thanks to the SFIO's success, its leader, Léon Blum, undertook to form a cabinet in which his party would not only participate but also take the lead. Blum, an assimilated Jew, had started his career as a literary critic before becoming converted to Jaurès's democratic and humanistic socialism at the time of the Dreyfus Affair. Largely because of his Jewish background, Blum inspired a degree of hatred among the French right that was out of proportion to his basically cautious and legalistic policies. When he made his first appearance before the Assembly as premier, the violently anti-Semitic deputy Xavier Vallat denounced him as "a subtle Talmudist." Blum courageously faced down such attacks, but he lacked the charisma to build a personal following. Stiff in manner and somewhat dandyish in his dress, thoughtful and cautious in his speech, he did not have the potential to be a French Franklin Roosevelt.

Eminently respectful of democratic constitutional procedures, Blum refused to take office during the month separating the May elections from the convocation of the new parliament. To the dissatisfaction of many of the Popular Front's voters, he also took the position that his government (in which the Socialists were only one partner) had been given only a mandate for limited reforms. Blum's caution was realistic, given the constraints of the parliamentary system, but it unavoidably opened a gap between the government's policies and the aspirations of many of those who had voted for the Popular Front. His position was also weakened because the PCF adopted the position previously taken by the Socialists vis-à-vis the Radical governments of 1924 and 1932. The Communists would vote for Blum's measures, but would not take seats in the ministry. The CGT, true to its long-standing rule against direct participation in politics, also refused to formally support the government.

Wave of Strikes

While Léon Blum prepared to assume the premiership, the Popular Front movement boiled over into a nationwide wave of industrial strikes more extensive than those of 1906 or 1920. Government statistics counted 12,142 separate strikes in June 1936 alone. Buoyed by the Popular Front victory and the recent reunification of a union movement that had been virtually silenced in the 1920s, the workers in the big factories built since the war adopted a militant new tactic. Instead of simply staying away from their jobs, they occupied their factories. The dramatic break from the usual work routine and the long hours spent together during these sit-ins generated a festival atmosphere during the hectic weeks of May and June 1936. The strongest support for the strikes came from those workers who had been most neglected during the 1920s—the previously unorganized inhabitants of working-class suburbs around Paris and other cities where industry had implanted itself since 1914. Just as the Revolution of 1848 had given an earlier, more artisanal working class a sense of identity, the 1936 strikes gave the new industrial proletariat a sense of strength and common purpose. The CGT, its ranks swollen by new members recruited in the heat of the excitement, had to scramble to gain control of a movement that had begun without any central direction. Even the Communists, the party closest to the factory workers, worried that the movement would go too far and scuttle the Popular Front experiment at the outset. "One has to know how to end a strike," the Communist leader Maurice Thorez proclaimed in June 1936.

Once Blum took office, he convoked national negotiations between union representatives, employers, and the government. These meetings resulted in a set of agreements known as the Matignon accords, providing for substantial wage increases (especially for lower-paid workers), employer recognition of unions, and collective bargaining agreements. These reforms substantially increased the bargaining power of organized labor.

The Matignon agreements were an improvised response to an emergency situation. But the Blum government also took a number of initiatives designed to make significant changes in French society. The *Banque de France*, which leftists blamed for undermining the *Cartel des Gauches* ministry in 1924, was brought under government control, although its policies remained largely unchanged. Blum's government nationalized the French armaments industry, the "merchants of death" whom leftist mythology blamed for pushing the country toward war in 1914. In 1937, the financially ailing railroads were merged into a mixed public-private enterprise, the SNCF. The Popular Front thus increased the scope of the government's involvement in the economy.

Blum's ministerial cabinet also reflected a number of other innovations. Although the Popular Front did not raise the issue of women's suffrage—the Radical Party in particular continued to fear that such a reform would benefit the conservative opposition—Blum appointed three women as cabinet undersecretaries. His government was the first to address "the problem of leisure" and make the provision of cultural and recreational opportunities for ordinary people a public responsibility through appointment of ministers for sport and culture. Leisure seemed a pressing issue because the government's initiatives included a substantial reduction in the legal work week to 40 hours, as well as implementation of the Popular Front's most enduring reform—paid vacations for all workers. In the summer of 1936, the industrial workforce for the first time joined the bourgeoisie in the trek to the beach and countryside. The vacation law was the clearest symbol of the government's determination to redistribute the social privileges that had continued to mark French society.

In the troubled world of 1936, the festive atmosphere of the Popular Front's first few weeks could not last. The breadth of the strike movement that followed the elections masked the extent of opposition to Blum's government. Employers accepted the Matignon accords only grudgingly. Once the strike wave ebbed, they blamed the Blum government and their own representatives for compelling them to make hasty concessions, and began chipping away at the workers' new rights. The conservative press ridiculed the behavior of the new vacationers. More fundamentally, Blum's government proved unable to end the economic depression, and its attention was soon diverted by new threats to France's security.

The Matignon accords and the government's other measures had been intended to restart the economy by giving people more money to spend. Meanwhile, Blum tried to maintain business confidence by refusing to devalue the French currency. It had appreciated substantially against the dollar and the pound since the start of the Depression, pricing French goods out of the world market. Blum's policies were poorly thought out from the economic point of view. For example, immediate implementation of the 40-hour week made it more difficult for factories to increase production to satisfy the new demand for many consumer goods that resulted from the Matignon wage increases. The economic policy, therefore, failed to achieve any of its objectives. Instead, the increase in wages caused inflation, and the government soon found itself with no choice but to devalue the franc. Nervous French investors

transferred as many funds as they could abroad. Blum, not wanting to confront them or clash with the British and American governments, refused to impose exchange controls to stop the outflow. In March 1937, he announced a “pause” in the Popular Front’s reform policies, hoping to reassure the business classes. He had little success; the “pause” served mainly to disappoint the Popular Front’s own supporters and to fuel Communist criticism of Blum’s excessive moderation.

The Popular Front government also tried to head off the growing split between France and its colonial populations. More explicitly than any previous French government, Blum’s ministry recognized the contradiction between calling for greater democracy in France and maintaining arbitrary control over non-European populations abroad. A parliamentary commission was appointed to recommend changes in colonial policy, but the Popular Front government had fallen by the time its report was completed. In September 1936, the French negotiated treaties granting independence to the two Middle Eastern territories France had acquired as mandates after the First World War, Syria and Lebanon, but the parliament refused to ratify them. The Blum ministry’s main reform effort, also unsuccessful, concerned Algeria, whose population and economy had grown rapidly after the war. The benefits of this growth had been monopolized by the European settlers, however, and the Muslim population was increasingly attracted to nationalist movements such as Messali Hadj’s *Parti du Peuple algérien* or to Islamic movements that rejected French ideas. There was still an important *évolué* group among the Algerians, represented by leaders such as Ferhat Abbas, who wanted to participate more fully in French life. The reforms proposed by Blum and his minister Maurice Viollette were designed to satisfy this group by allowing them to join the European settlers in electing deputies to the French parliament and giving them greater access to government positions.

Opposition to the Blum-Viollette proposal among the French Algerians was so violent that the French assembly never even debated the proposal. Algeria became a breeding ground for extreme rightwing movements; its local chapters of the *Croix de feu* movement, for example, were more overtly racist and anti-Semitic than the movement as a whole. Representatives of Ferhat Abbas’s group, on the other hand, drew the conclusion that France would never follow through on the promise of eventual assimilation and shifted toward a more radical nationalist position. The chances of converting the empire into a democratic system with which the colonies could identify were rapidly fading.

By June of 1937, the Blum ministry’s difficulties, especially its inability to control the economic and financial crisis, had fatally undermined the high hopes with which the Popular Front government began. Unable to overcome the hostility of the conservative Senate, Blum resigned in place of a Radical-led cabinet pledged to continue the Popular Front’s overall policies.

Responding to the Fascist Threat Abroad

Part of the Blum government’s economic difficulties stemmed from the rapidly deteriorating international situation. Hitler’s remilitarization of the Rhineland had tilted the military balance toward a rapidly rearming Germany. How to respond to the fascist threat deeply divided the Popular Front movement. The issue became acute in July 1936, when the Spanish colonel Francisco Franco began a military rebellion against the left-oriented Popular Front government that had recently taken power in Spain. Blum’s initial

impulse was to lend aid to the Spanish government, the Loyalists, but the risk of war this policy implied incurred the hostility of many French Radicals for whom the Spanish Popular Front was too leftist. It also was opposed by the strong pacifist current within Blum's own SFIO. By the beginning of August 1936, the French government had proclaimed a policy of rigid nonintervention in Spain, cutting off most aid to the Loyalists, while fascist Italy and Nazi Germany sent arms and "volunteers" to aid Franco's forces. The French Communists vehemently opposed the nonintervention policy and promoted demonstrations for "arms for Spain," which became visible evidence of the disintegration of the Popular Front coalition.

Undermined by the failure of its economic policies and its internal divisions, the Popular Front parliamentary majority began to come apart. Many Radical voters and deputies had never been happy about joining a coalition with the Communists. Continuing labor unrest in 1937 and 1938, due to workers' disillusionment with results of the 1936 accords, provided them with arguments about the need to end the Popular Front experiment. Opposition to the Popular Front often took the form of virulent anti-Semitism. There was considerable hostility to the wave of German Jewish refugees who came to France after Hitler took power in 1933. Unlike the working-class immigrants of the 1920s, many of the Jewish immigrants were educated professionals. French doctors and lawyers, facing difficult conditions because of the Depression, reacted violently to these potential competitors, often demanding the imposition of Jewish quotas. As the danger of war with Germany grew, Jews—who could hardly avoid opposing Hitler—were blamed for pushing France into an unpopular armed conflict. No anti-Semitic laws were enacted in France before the German invasion of 1940—in fact, in April 1939, passage of a law forbidding incitement of racial and religious prejudice in the press allowed the prosecution of some zealous anti-Semites—but the vocal attacks on the Jewish population in the 1930s paved the way for measures against them after France's military defeat in 1940.

Opposition to the Popular Front was not limited to propaganda. An extremist group, the *Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire*, better known as the *Cagoule*, tried to organize a military putsch against the government. This effort failed, but hooded *Cagoule* assassins murdered several prominent leftists and created a climate of tension. The far-right press directed a stream of invective of unprecedented violence against the Blum government and all those associated with it. A defamatory campaign against the Socialist interior minister Roger Salengro, falsely accused of cowardice during the First World War, drove him to suicide in the fall of 1936. The Popular Front government banned several of the rightwing leagues and broke up the *Cagoule*, but it failed to stop the shift to the right. Colonel de la Rocque's *Croix-de-Feu* reincarnated itself as a political party, the *Parti Social Français*, which gained increasing numbers of adherents and appeared well on its way to becoming the first genuinely mass-based French conservative party.

The failure of Léon Blum's second attempt to form a ministry in the spring of 1938 cleared the way for the final end to the Popular Front coalition. His successor, the Radical Edouard Daladier, confronted the labor movement head on in August 1938 by revoking the 40-hour law passed in 1936. Daladier justified the measure by the need to increase weapons production in view of the growing German menace, and he used force to suppress strikes called to protest it. Daladier's energetic finance minister, Paul Reynaud extended the offensive against the labor movement and the measures adopted in 1936. His policies, justified by the ever-more-threatening international situation and

by failure of Popular Front measures to end the depression, had the effect of stimulating a genuine increase in industrial production in 1939. This diminished any enthusiasm among the Radicals for a return to the leftwing coalition.

The Popular Front government lasted just over two years and broke up without having overcome the Depression or guaranteed European peace—two of its main objectives. That its economic policies were poorly conceived is now conceded, even by historians sympathetic to Blum and his movement. The Popular Front was also weakened by its own internal divisions. The Communist movement was often ready to outbid Blum's government from the left, while the Radicals, officially part of the coalition, took advantage of their Senate position to undermine many of its policies. But Blum was not only a victim of his own mistakes and his movement's contradictions. The Popular Front's problems were aggravated by the vehemence of conservative opposition it confronted. By 1936, the degree of social and political consensus in France had become dangerously frayed. And the international situation France faced complicated the Popular Front's problems at every turn.

The threat of war loomed over the Paris World's Fair of 1937, whose organizers had meant to revive and update the tradition of the great international expositions of the late-nineteenth century. Visitors were most struck by the confrontation of the massive pavilions sponsored by the two hostile totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, which had been placed directly across from each other, and by the display of Picasso's *Guernica*, a painting deplored the violence of the Spanish Civil War.

Despite all this, the Popular Front was not a complete failure. It did mark a significant step in integrating the industrial working class into France's social and political system. In expanding the role of government in economic, social, and cultural life, it advanced a process that was to be carried even further by succeeding regimes. The broad-based social movement that underlay the election victory of 1936 also left a long-lasting heritage. The workers who had occupied their factories in 1936 were more self-conscious and militant than before. They recognized themselves in the propaganda of the Communist party, which succeeded in institutionalizing itself as the main representative of the French working class for the next four decades.

France Enters Hitler's War

Although reluctance to contemplate another war was almost universal in France during the 1930s, no one could ignore the growing threat from Germany after 1933. Profiting from the unrest caused by the Depression in Germany, the National Socialist leader Adolf Hitler had taken power in January 1933 and, within a few months, replaced the democratic institutions established there after the First World War with a dictatorship in which all opposition was eliminated. Hitler had repeatedly indicated his determination to overturn the Versailles peace settlement. France had already accepted significant revisions of the Versailles pact in the 1920s, and its leaders were slow to recognize the difference between the German politicians of the Weimar Republic and Hitler. In any event, the unstable French governments of the mid-1930s were preoccupied with domestic problems, and any inclination they might have had to stand up to Germany was quashed by their British ally's determination to pursue a policy of appeasement, granting concessions to Hitler in the hope of moderating his policy. Hitler's violently anti-semitic policies drew criticism from the French left, but many conservatives had some sympathy for them, and for the Nazi leader's vehement denunciations of communism.

French government policy in the face of Hitler shifted erratically. In early 1935, a short-lived ministry headed by Pierre Laval, who would later collaborate with Hitler, signed a military agreement with the Soviet Union that revived the pre-First World War alliance. But this ran counter to France's system of treaties with the smaller countries of Eastern Europe—Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania—which were all hostile to the Soviets. At the same time, Laval tried to improve relations with Mussolini's Italy. He was even prepared to tolerate the *Duce*'s invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. But there was a tremendous public uproar when the terms of a proposed Anglo-French endorsement of Mussolini's aggression, the Hoare-Laval pact, became known. The Italians were driven into the arms of Hitler's Germany, whose ambition to annex Austria had initially antagonized Mussolini, and Laval's hope of creating a large anti-Hitler bloc crumbled.

Under these circumstances, France failed to exert much influence on the course of events that was leading Europe toward a new war. From 1936 to 1939, Hitler went from one diplomatic triumph to another. France accepted the remilitarization of the Rhineland and confined itself to nonintervention in Spain, while Italy and Germany—now united by the Axis pact—gave open support to Franco's forces. In March 1938, Hitler annexed Austria to his German Reich, enlarging his own war potential and menacing France's ally, Czechoslovakia. France renewed its promise to defend the Czechs but, in the absence of agreement with the British and the Soviets, the gesture was a hollow one. In the late summer of 1938, when Hitler demanded that Czechoslovakia give him the German-speaking Sudetenland, the French followed the lead of the British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, who proposed an international conference at Munich to seek a settlement. As Hitler raised the tension—threatening to invade Czechoslovakia if his demands were not granted—French public opinion remained predominantly pacifist, giving Daladier little encouragement to take a firm stand. At Munich on September 30, 1938, the two western powers granted Hitler's demand, abandoning the Czechs. French leaders knew what they were doing; Léon Blum referred to the "cowardly sense of relief and shame" they felt at the manner in which they had averted armed conflict, and prime minister Daladier himself considered it "an immense diplomatic defeat."¹ France, which had considered itself the dominant European power at the end of the First World War, had now been reduced to diplomatic passivity.

The Munich crisis opened an angry debate about France's situation that showed the extent of the country's divisions. The new technique of public opinion polling, just introduced in France at the time, showed that 57 percent of the population approved the agreement, with 37 percent opposed. The question of how to respond to the German threat cut across the customary lines of political division. The *Munichois* included leftwing pacifists—85 percent of Socialists supported a pacifist resolution at the 1938 party congress—and moderates who considered that France could not afford another bloodbath on the scale of the first war. Most women's groups remained loyal to their commitment to peace and supported the agreement. On the far right, the Munich agreement had the support of those who considered Hitler the only serious barrier to the spread of Communism, and of fascist intellectuals such as the novelist Drieu la Rochelle, who frankly admired Nazi vitality and considered his own countrymen "a dessicated people."² Marcel Déat, the neosocialist dissident, openly asked whether the French were prepared to "die for Danzig," the city in Poland that became Hitler's next target after Czechoslovakia. The opponents of Munich were equally

varied. At one extreme, they included the French Communists, who had followed Stalin's orders since 1935 to support French military preparedness against Germany. At the other, there were nationalist conservatives such as the hardline finance minister Paul Reynaud.

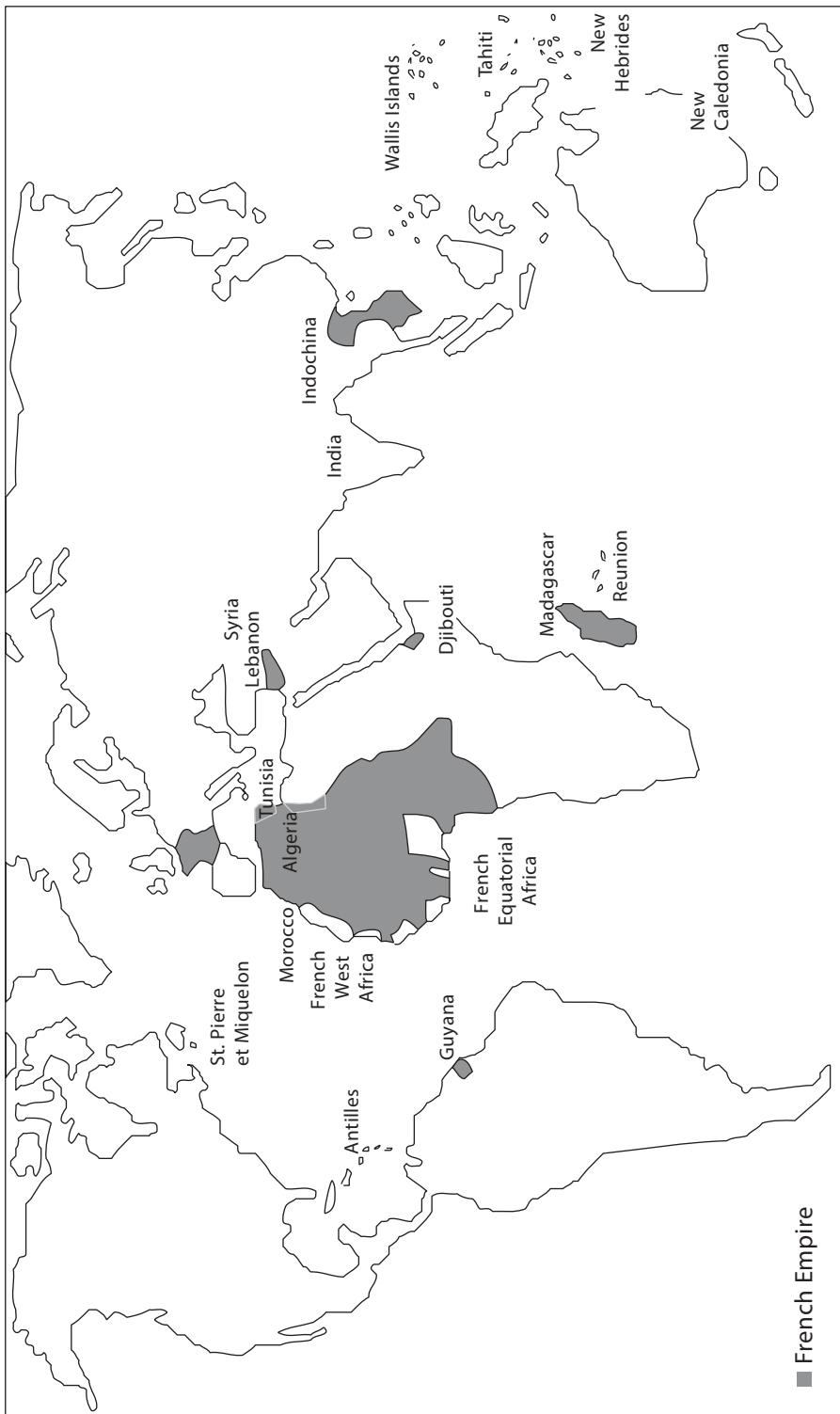
The debate following Munich led to a growing recognition of the German danger. By December of 1938, 70 percent of those polled opposed any further concessions to Hitler. The Popular Front government had already stepped up funding for rearmament. In March 1938, a greatly expanded plan for aircraft production had been adopted. After Munich, the planning expert Jean Monnet was sent to the United States to get American manufacturers to start turning out modern planes for the French air force. But this evidence of determination to be ready for the pending conflict came very late, and it was insufficient to counter the debilitating effects of earlier mistakes.

One of the problems confronting France and Britain was their inability to reach agreement with the Soviet Union, which had been excluded from the Munich negotiations. The Soviet dictator Stalin increasingly suspected a western plot to abandon him to Hitler's mercy. In 1939, negotiations on military cooperation between the western Allies and the Soviets began, but the Soviets also opened secret contacts with the Germans. In any event, the smaller eastern European states refused to agree to the passage of Soviet troops through their territories, blocking any realistic plan for military action against Hitler. On August 23, 1939, the Russians and Germans stunned the world with the announcement of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, making them virtual allies.

For the French, as for the British, the Nazi-Soviet agreement was a severe blow, because war had visibly become imminent. Repeating the scenario he had used a year earlier against Czechoslovakia, Hitler demanded concessions from Poland. The two western powers responded by renewing their guarantees to that country. This time, there was no last-minute diplomatic evasion. On September 1, 1939, the Germans invaded Poland, and on September 3, with some visible reluctance, France followed Britain in declaring war. Even more clearly than in 1914, the French public was hardly eager for a fight. The success of mobilization plans showed that the population was resigned to its necessity. But France had faced up to the necessity of the war too late to be well prepared for it.

French military plans for another major conflict with Germany had been decided by debates conducted in the 1920s. The lesson of the First World War, as interpreted by Philippe Pétain, the dominant figure in the interwar military, was the superiority of a defensive strategy. By the end of the 1920s, France had decided to base its military planning on a system of elaborate underground fortifications along the German border, named the Maginot Line in honor of the minister of war who formulated the plan. The Maginot-line plan was never fully implemented: The line of fortifications stopped short at the Belgian border. The French could not decide whether to extend it all the way to the Channel, thereby leaving Belgium open to a German attack, or to plan on meeting the German advance north of their own border.

One prominent French officer, a certain Colonel Charles de Gaulle, had raised public objections to Pétain's defensive strategy. In his *Toward a Professional Army*, published in 1934, de Gaulle urged the development of tank divisions manned by well-trained career soldiers rather than citizen draftees and prepared for offensive operations—ideas already being adopted at that time by German military planners. De Gaulle won some converts to his ideas among the politicians of the late 1930s, but his criticisms angered the French military hierarchy, who clung even more firmly to their defensive plans.



Map 26.1 The French Empire, 1940

The French Empire reached its peak during the interwar period, sustaining the illusion that the country was still a world power. Colonial elites were already beginning to demand autonomy or independence even before the Second World War, however.

With the declaration of war in September 1939, those plans were put into effect. The French troops installed themselves in the underground forts of the Maginot Line. Meanwhile, fast-moving German armored units, supported by aircraft, demonstrated the effectiveness of their new *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) strategy against the Poles, who were defeated in less than two months. After the Polish surrender, British and French troops faced each other throughout the fall and winter without undertaking military operation in the so-called phony war. This period of inaction undermined French morale and raised new questions about the purpose of the war. It was too late to help the Poles and, in the absence of a German attack, there was no immediate threat to rally against.

Domestically, the situation was further confused by the Communist Party's change of policy. In response to the Nazi-Soviet pact, Stalin had ordered the French Communists to drop their support for the war. Daladier's government responded by outlawing the organization, arresting several of its officials. The Communist leader Maurice Thorez deserted his military unit and fled to the Soviet Union. The government also used the outbreak of the war to justify a crackdown on nationalist movements in the colonies. Instead of a *union sacrée*, the war of 1939 to 1940 began with the creation of new divisions. The long months of the "phony war" exacerbated quarrels about strategy. Daladier wanted to offer military support to Finland, which had become embroiled in a war against the Soviet Union, but resistance to the idea brought his cabinet down in March 1940. He was replaced by Paul Reynaud, who was committed to a vigorous pursuit of the war with Germany, but who obtained only a narrow majority in the Chamber. On May 9, 1940, Reynaud's cabinet was defeated in its turn, but there was never time for a successor to be found. On May 10, the German invasion of France began.

Notes

1 Cited in Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *La Décadence 1932–1939* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1979), 356.

2 Cited in Pierre Milza, *Fascisme français* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), 220.

27 France in the Second World War

The four years of military defeat and foreign occupation France suffered between 1940 and 1944 form one of the darkest and most controversial chapters in the country's modern history. To this day, ordinary citizens and historians argue about who should bear the blame for the defeat, about the conduct of the population and the government during the war, and about the extent of resistance to the occupation.

The Debacle

The *drôle de guerre*, or “phony war,” that had begun in September 1939 came to an abrupt end with a massive German offensive on May 10, 1940. The Germans’ first moves were meant to convince the French and British that they once again, as in 1914, faced an attack through the Low Countries. In response, the Allied armies moved north from the French border into Belgium—and into the German trap. The main German thrust was being prepared further south, where General Guderian’s armored divisions were making their way along the narrow roads of the hilly Ardennes through Luxembourg and southern Belgium, heading for the point where the French Maginot fortifications ended.

Postwar historians exploded the belief, widely held in France at the time, that the attacking German army must have heavily outnumbered the Allied forces. The two sides had approximately the same numbers of troops and tanks, and the newest French tank models were better than those of the Germans. The Germans had some superiority in air power, although the Allies were rapidly closing the gap. The Germans’ advantage was one of imagination. Hitler and his generals were determined to take the offensive, and they had recognized the potential of the new weapons at their disposal. Their strategy was built around the use of powerful concentrations of tanks and motorized infantry, closely supported by air power, to launch rapid breakthrough attacks and avoid the static warfare that had characterized the First World War. The French and British, by contrast, had anticipated another defensive conflict, and counted on wearing the Germans down through an economic blockade. Their tanks were dispersed in small concentrations to support their infantry units, and their air forces were not coordinated with the ground troops. The French command structure was another weak point. The overall commander, General Maurice Gamelin, was frequently at odds with his field commanders; and the various headquarters were separated from each other and often out of communication at crucial points in the battle. The success of the German *Blitzkrieg* in Poland had inspired the French army to create armored divisions similar to the Germans’, but the process was still far from complete when the fighting began.

On May 15, the German armored divisions emerged from the Ardennes near the French city of Sedan, site of the disastrous French defeat in 1870. Because the French thought that the terrain would prevent a German attack on this sector of the front, Sedan was held by second-line troops unprepared to meet an all-out assault. The Germans quickly routed these defenders and sent their tanks dashing across northern France to the sea. They reached the coast by May 20, cutting off the Allied forces that had entered Belgium from behind.

As the German high command itself knew, their strategy was risky. If the French had shown the resilience Joffre had demonstrated in 1914, the narrow German spearhead might have been vulnerable to a counterattack. But this time, there was no “miracle of the Marne.” At Gamelin’s headquarters, panic and confusion spread rapidly. Reynaud, who continued as prime minister despite his loss of a parliamentary majority, reshuffled his cabinet, but the new recruits divided it more than ever. Some, like the recently promoted General Charles de Gaulle, urged continued resistance even if the government had to take refuge in the North African colonies. Others, like the aged hero of the First World War, Marshal Philippe Pétain—brought in to bolster the government’s prestige—clearly considered the war already lost.

As the Germans advanced, the French population panicked. On June 10, the government abandoned Paris, which the Germans occupied on June 14. Some 6 million civilians, terrorized by German bombing raids, fled as best they could, jamming the roads along which French units were trying to get to the front. The administration fell into chaos as local officials abandoned their posts. The French Jewish novelist Irène Nemirovsky’s *Suite Française*, written during the war but only published decades after the author’s death at Auschwitz, furnishes an unforgettable description of the panicky exodus. By the time government ministers reassembled in Bordeaux on June 14, many of them had become as demoralized as the fleeing civilians. On June 15, the cabinet voted to inquire about German conditions for an armistice. The next day, Reynaud resigned, and the defeatist Pétain took his place. Plans to continue the fight from a fortified position on the Brittany peninsula or from the North African colonies were quickly abandoned. On June 17, Pétain, by radio, informed the population that the fighting was over.

Armistice Terms

The German terms, imposed under humiliating circumstances (Hitler insisted that they be signed in the railway carriage used for the 1918 armistice negotiations), were harsh. As long as the war against Britain continued, the Germans were to keep the strategically important parts of the country—the entire Atlantic coast and the northern and eastern regions, including Paris, altogether three-fifths of France—under military occupation. The French government would retain sovereignty over the rest of the territory and nominal responsibility for civilian administration throughout the country. France was to pay the Germans a heavy indemnity for costs of the military occupation, calculated according to an exchange rate very favorable to the Germans. This allowed them to use French funds to support their own war effort. French troops were interned in German prisoner of war camps pending the end of the conflict. France’s one intact military asset, its navy, was kept out of German control, but was to remain in its home ports and not help the British. Originally foreseen as a temporary arrangement, due to be revised as soon as Hitler’s lone remaining opponent, Britain, had been defeated, the armistice terms became the framework for French life for the rest of the war. It put France in a unique position among the

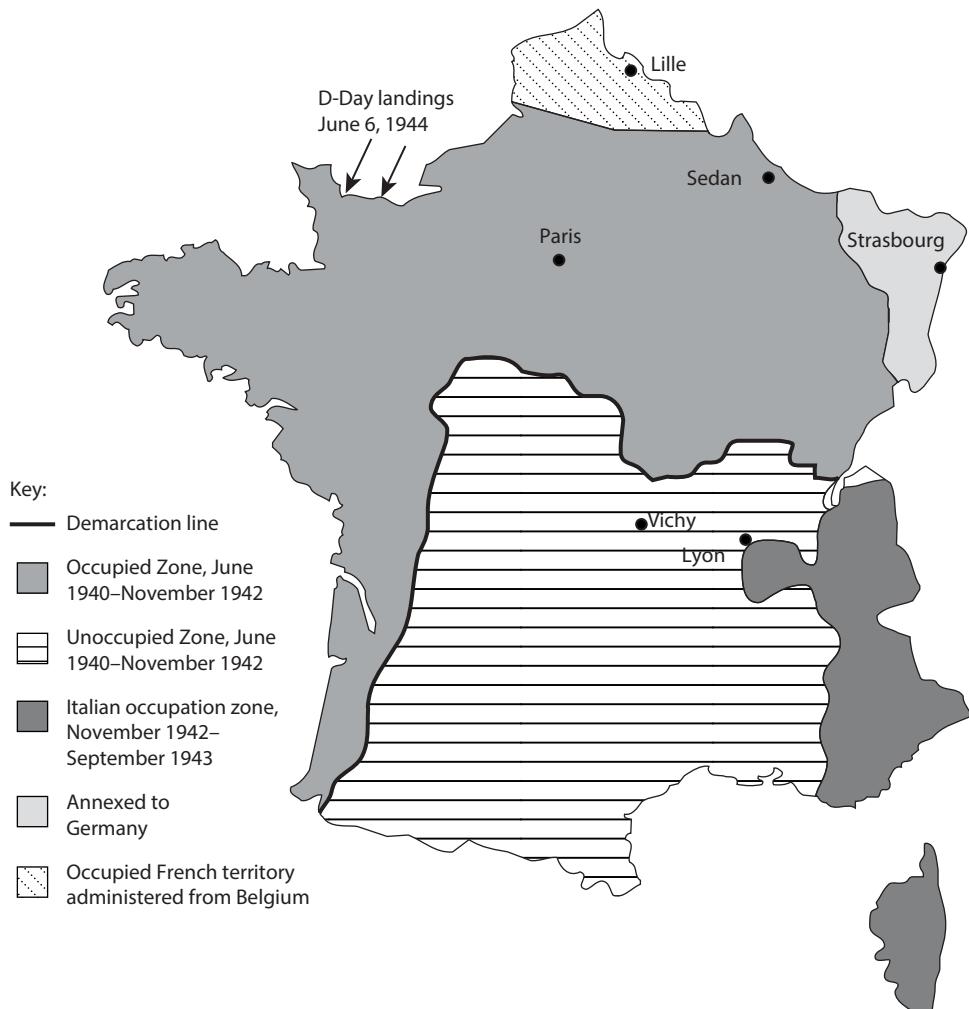
nations of occupied Europe—the only country whose government did not continue the war from exile, but which was also not put under direct German administration. Pétain and his supporters thought that this arrangement would give France a better chance to protect its vital interests. The course of events showed that this was a dubious hope.

The defeat of June 1940 exposed the hollowness of prewar claims that the resources of France's overseas empire would enable it to stand up to Germany. Pétain's refusal to move the French government to North Africa to continue the war showed that, as far as he was concerned, the defeat in Europe was all that mattered. In one way, however, the German occupation made the colonies more important than ever. Germany was unable to occupy France's overseas territories and depended on Pétain's regime to keep their resources from falling into British hands. From the French point of view, the colonies, together with France's undamaged navy, were the only assets the country had left with which it might be able to bargain with the Germans.

The Vichy Regime

For most of the population, the end of the fighting came as an enormous relief, and the aged Marshal Pétain was hailed as a hero for having saved France from a repetition of the horrendous losses suffered in the First World War. The armistice agreement meant that sons or husbands in the army would not be killed in a hopeless fight. It also promised that civilian refugees would be allowed to return home and resume their regular routines, although the Germans soon made it clear that there would be many exceptions. Residents of Alsace and Lorraine, territories now annexed to Germany, could only go home if they swore loyalty to the conquerors; and inhabitants of other "forbidden zones" that the Germans considered vital for ongoing military operations were also kept from returning. Only a small minority of French fascist sympathizers really welcomed the German victory, but most of the population accepted Hitler's triumph as an accomplished fact. Britain, it was widely assumed, would also have to make terms with him. Anti-British sentiment welled up in the wake of the defeat, as the French blamed their allies for giving them inadequate support. This feeling was strengthened when the British, fearing that the Germans might gain control of the French navy, attacked their former ally's ships at Mers-el-Kebir in Morocco on July 3, 1940, and sank several with heavy loss of life. British bombing raids on cities along France's northern coast, meant to prevent the Germans from using them as naval bases, also caused resentment.

Not only did most French welcome the end of the fighting, the majority also shared their new leader's conviction that the nation's defeat was the fault of men and movements that had governed the country during the 1930s. In a radio speech to the nation on June 20, 1940, Pétain blamed the defeat on deep-seated shortcomings in France's prewar society. "Since the victory [of 1918], the spirit of indulgence overwhelmed the spirit of sacrifice," he told his listeners. "People have made too many demands and showed too little willingness to contribute." The result of this spirit of egoism, as he pithily summed it up, had been "too few babies, too few weapons."¹ The moralizing tone of Pétain's speech was not all that different from that of the historian and future Resistance martyr Marc Bloch, who based his essay, *Strange Defeat*, on his experiences as a reserve officer called to duty during the campaign. Although he did not share Pétain's reactionary political views, he did agree that the French defeat was more than a military mishap. It reflected a pervasive failure of France's governing classes, who had not prepared the country to meet the challenges of the modern world.



Map 27.1 France during the Second World War

After the armistice of June 1940, more than half of metropolitan France was put under German military occupation. The Germans took over the Vichy-administered unoccupied zone after the Allied landings in North Africa in November 1942.

In this atmosphere, a broad cross section of the population was willing to let Pétain restructure the country's institutions, even before the outcome of the war was clear. On July 10, 1940, by a majority of 468 to 80, the Third Republic's deputies gave Pétain a mandate to draft a new constitution, terminating the regime under which France had lived since 1875. Pétain, titled Head of the French State—a designation which showed the new regime's desire to distance itself from the republican tradition—took up residence in the small provincial town of Vichy, a health resort in the unoccupied zone whose numerous hotels gave the government space to install itself. He appointed

a cabinet made up primarily of conservative critics of parliamentary democracy who were determined to carry out a “National Revolution” against the forces responsible for France’s defeat. What the French right had not been able to do through the ballot box for seven decades it would now attempt thanks to the German victory—the transformation of French life along hierarchical, antideocratic principles.

Although the Vichy leaders were united in their contempt for the democratic republic they replaced, they agreed about little else. Some, like the marshal himself, were traditionalists who saw the National Revolution as a chance to restore France to its true roots by banishing foreigners, rehabilitating old artisan skills, and reinvigorating rural life. Others admired the technological modernity of Hitler’s Germany and saw the abolition of the parliamentary republic as an opportunity to make France more efficient and up-to-date. At the outset, some saw the Vichy government as an opportunity to maintain a certain autonomy for France in Hitler’s Europe, while others believed that the nation’s survival depended on a wholehearted collaboration with the Germans. Torn between these contradictory impulses, the Vichy regime’s policy remained incoherent and at the mercy of German pressures.

The regime’s principal asset in winning popular support was Pétain himself. Vichy propaganda worked diligently to create a cult around him. Ordinary people from all ranks of life made pilgrimages to Vichy to see Pétain emerge from his headquarters at the *Hôtel du Parc* for his daily walk, sometimes even kneeling to touch his coat as he passed. Schoolchildren were taught to sing, “Marshal, here we are before you, Savior of France.” Although it was Pétain more than anyone else who had pushed for the defensive strategy that led to the French army’s defeat in 1940, he still commanded immense respect from the military. Many officers remained convinced that his policy of collaboration with the Germans masked a “double game” of secret preparation for a war of revenge when the time was right, as Pétain was to assert at his postwar trial. Until late in the war, much of the population retained its respect for him even as they became more and more hostile to his government.

Under cover of Pétain’s popularity, the Vichy leaders sought to remodel the country along authoritarian lines. For the republican motto, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,” the regime substituted its own trinity, “Work, Family, Fatherland,” emphasizing obligations to the community rather than individual rights. Vichy ostentatiously courted the support of the church, and conservative Catholics—long estranged from the Republic—eagerly welcomed a government sympathetic to their concerns. The regime preached a return to the traditional family model and elaborated the system of family allocations that had been inaugurated just a few months before the war by the Daladier government. In response to conservative objections, Vichy repealed prewar reforms that had made secondary education free, thus restoring a system that favored wealthy families.

To get young people away from the debilitating temptations of city life, *Chantiers de la jeunesse* took urban adolescents to the countryside, where they were supposed to learn the pleasures of physical exercise and quasi-military discipline. A *Commissariat du sport*, headed until 1942 by the interwar tennis star Jean Borotra, continued efforts begun under the Popular Front to make French youth more physically fit. Some of the regime’s initiatives, such as the quasi-monastic *École des cadres* set up at Uriage in southern France under the direction of inspirational army officer Pierre Dunoyer de Segonzac to train a new generation of leaders, reflected a genuine patriotic idealism. This spirit led many of the young Uriage participants to join the Resistance later in the war. In the economic sphere, corporatist policies promised to overcome the division



Figure 27.1 Propaganda Poster for the Vichy Regime’s National Revolution

This propaganda poster for the Vichy regime’s National Revolution contrasts the discredited Third Republic (shown tilting toward ruin because of the supposed domination of the Jews) with a solid France resting on foundations labeled “Work, Family, Fatherland.” Native French traditions of anti-Semitism facilitated collaboration with the German occupiers. (© Archivart/Alamy Stock Photo)

between workers and employers. Government-sponsored *comités d’organisation* were created for each branch of industry. The postwar veterans’ organizations were forcibly merged to create a *Légion française des combattants* controlled by the government, which some Vichy leaders hoped to use as the basis for a mass movement modeled after Mussolini’s Fascists and Hitler’s Nazi party.

The installation of the Vichy regime offered an opportunity for all those who thought that the Third Republic had given women too many rights, at the expense of the traditional family. “Unfortunately, women’s exaggerated emancipation has destroyed familial traditions,” one conservative woman wrote.² Emancipated women were blamed for turning away from motherhood and therefore harming the country; public schools were castigated for encouraging young women to aspire to jobs that should be reserved for men. To encourage women to return to more traditional roles, Vichy made Mother’s Day, introduced in France in 1920 in an effort to encourage larger families, into an official state holiday. Teachers were told to direct children on how to observe it, and Marshal Pétain himself emphasized its importance. Laws issued in October 1940 barred women, like Jews, from civil-service jobs and ordered private employers to give hiring preference to married men with children. In April 1941, the divorce law passed

in 1884 was amended to make the procedure more difficult, and in February 1942, abortion was defined as a crime against state and society.

As in many other areas, Vichy's efforts to define gender roles were undercut by wartime conditions. With prices soaring and food in short supply, Vichy's own officials realized that women had to seek jobs if they and their families were to survive. When the Germans began demanding that France furnish laborers to work in that country in 1942, the laws discouraging women from working had to be suspended, and ultimately even married women were recruited to meet German requirements. The corporatist reorganization of industry was another aspect of the National Revolution that, under the pressure of wartime necessities and German demands, turned out very differently from the hopes of Vichy's traditionalists. Rather than favoring a revival of traditional French craftsmanship, the war called for rational exploitation of France's economic resources. The *comités d'organisation* became a means to favor the largest, most efficient manufacturers at the expense of both workers and smaller competitors. Within a few months of the armistice, German representatives were signing contracts with French businesses. The heavy indemnity payments required under the armistice agreement allowed the Germans to make the French themselves pay for this exploitation of their economy. Despite Vichy's claim that it was protecting French interests, the Germans extracted more resources from France than from any other conquered territory, and the French standard of living was reduced below that of any of the other German-occupied western European nations.

Driven by wartime conditions to ration raw materials, the Vichy government steadily increased the state's economic role, continuing the trend begun in the 1930s. Key administrators like Jean Bichelonne, who became head of a new Ministry of Industrial Production in 1942, had the opportunity to implement many ideas about state-directed economic planning that they had formulated before the war. To be sure, Vichy did not follow the Popular Front's efforts to improve labor relations by giving unions an increased role. Its Labor Charter, issued in October 1941, prohibited strikes. But even in this area, Vichy took some modernizing initiatives, such as requiring employers to set up social committees with worker representation to oversee conditions in factories. Paradoxically, the traditionalist-minded Vichy government thus accelerated processes of economic modernization begun under previous governments.

The Politics of Collaboration

One of the main disputes about the war period has been the question of whether collaboration with the German war effort was imposed on the Vichy government, or whether it represented a policy voluntarily adopted by France's wartime leaders. When the Vichy leaders were brought to account after the Liberation, they naturally maintained that they had acted under duress. Historians have shown that this was often untrue: at least until the German occupation of the entirety of French territory in November 1942, Pétain and his colleagues actively sought possibilities for collaboration, sometimes offering to go further than the Germans wanted. Historians of the Vichy period remind us, however, that the wartime situation was a complicated one. Philippe Burrin writes that some accommodation with the German forces occupying most of the country was inevitable, since the population had to make a living, and Julian Jackson remarks that "the history of the Occupation should be written not in black and white, but in shades of grey."³

The question of how to deal with the Germans dominated Vichy politics from the outset. Pétain's first prime minister, Pierre Laval, named in July 1940, was a veteran Third Republic parliamentarian firmly convinced that France's salvation lay in genuine cooperation with the Germans. He and the other Vichy leaders courted the Germans even in the face of clear signs that the latter had no interest in real collaboration. From the outset, German policy violated key aspects of the armistice agreement. The Germans immediately annexed Alsace and Lorraine and began expelling their French population. The vital industrial department of the Nord was also detached from French authority and combined with occupied Belgium. The armistice agreement had promised that the French government could return to Paris, but the Germans never permitted this. The demarcation line between the occupied and unoccupied zones took on the character of a frontier, and French citizens needed German passes to cross it. The division of the country threatened to cripple the economy, and the punitive payments imposed on the French stood in the way of any real understanding between the two governments.

In the fall of 1940, Laval and Pétain made determined efforts to improve France's position by offering to assist the German war effort. Laval sought out sympathetic German representatives, such as Otto Abetz, a Foreign Ministry official stationed in Paris who had promoted friendly Franco-German relations long before the war. In return for German concessions on indemnity payments and respect for France's territorial integrity, Laval hinted that France might even enter the war against Britain. Pétain was less enthusiastic about military cooperation, but he met publicly with Hitler at the French town of Montoire in October 1940 to discuss possibilities for collaboration. In reality, Hitler had little interest in closer ties with the French, and neither Laval nor Pétain obtained significant concessions. German concerns were limited to insuring that Vichy was able to prevent the British from gaining control of the French colonies. Other than that, the one-sided armistice agreement served German interests too well for them to have much interest in altering it.

Laval's failure to obtain any meaningful agreements with the Germans was one of the main reasons why Pétain, who had no love for his subordinate, dismissed him on December 13, 1940. The swift German reaction to this move showed how limited the Vichy government's authority really was. Laval's German friend Abetz descended on Vichy, accompanied by gun-wielding guards, to liberate the arrested prime minister and take him back to Paris. The German authorities refused to deal with Laval's first successor, Pierre-Etienne Flandin, a former appeasement advocate who had sent Hitler a well-publicized telegram in 1938 congratulating him on the Munich accord. They were only slightly more forthcoming when Pétain replaced him with Admiral François Darlan in February 1941. Like Laval, Darlan approached the Germans with proposals for cooperation in a number of areas, including possible military involvement. But the Germans limited their interest to details such as obtaining the right to use French bases in Syria for an unsuccessful effort to support an Iraqi revolt against the British in May and June of 1941.

While Hitler himself paid little attention to French affairs, individual officials like Abetz pursued their own policies. In Abetz's case, this meant pressure for the reappointment of Laval as prime minister, a goal he finally achieved in April 1942. Laval continued his effort to prove the value of France's collaboration to the Germans. In response to German demands for laborers to keep their war factories running, he set up a scheme—the *relève*—under which the Germans were to release one French prisoner of war for every three

workers who volunteered to go to Germany. Although Laval avoided the issue of French military participation in the war, he committed himself to the German cause more emphatically than any other French leader to date. "I hope for a German victory," he said in a speech in June 1942, "because otherwise, Bolshevism will take over everywhere."⁴

Vichy's policy toward the Jews was a particularly dangerous blend of autonomous French initiatives and collaboration with German policies. As early as July 1940, the Germans pressured the French into treating their own Jewish citizens differently from others when they forbade Jews who had fled south during the fighting from returning to their homes in Paris and the occupied zone. But the Pétain regime soon started taking anti-Semitic actions on its own. The Vichy *Statut des Juifs*, issued on October 3, 1940, had a stricter definition of Jewishness than Nazi Germany's own racial laws, and the Pétain government complained vigorously about the German policy of expelling Jews from the Reich to France. Jews who were not French citizens were interned in camps, where they were held under harsh conditions and were especially vulnerable when the Germans began their program of deportations. In Algeria, which the Germans did not control, Vichy officials repealed the 1870 Crémieux law that had given the Jewish population there French citizenship. In June 1941, Vichy officials issued new anti-Jewish legislation, barring even French Jewish citizens from civil service posts and professions, allowing confiscation of Jewish-owned property, and creating a centralized register of Jewish inhabitants. These measures reflected the long-standing anti-Semitism of French rightwingers such as *Action française* leader Charles Maurras, whose influence was also evident in Vichy's laws against Freemasons. Members of the Masons, traditionally active in republican politics, were accused of forming a secret conspiracy to dominate the country. Like the Jews, they were excluded from government positions and teaching posts. Homosexuals were another group targeted by the regime; its measures against them were the first legislation criminalizing adult same-sex relations since the French Revolution had abolished religious laws against sodomy in 1791.

In the course of 1942, when the Germans began to implement their "Final Solution" by deporting Jews from all over Europe to death camps, they were able to take advantage of Vichy's earlier measures, which had made the French Jewish population easily identifiable. Most French Jews, accustomed to acting like law-abiding citizens of a country that had protected them since the time of the French Revolution, had obediently reported their addresses. Anxious to maintain the appearance of French sovereignty in the German-occupied zone, Laval agreed in June 1942 to have French police carry out the roundup of "foreign" Jews in Paris in July 1942—the *rafle* of the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, an indoor bicycle-racing stadium used to hold the almost 13,000 victims before they were sent to Auschwitz. Laval even insisted that the Germans take not only adults but Jewish children as well. He and Pétain did object to the deportation of Jews holding French citizenship, but they agreed to revoke the naturalization of Jews who had received that status under the law passed in 1927.

The willingness to collaborate with the Germans was by no means limited to the Vichy leadership. Even after the end of the early honeymoon period of occupation, during which the French population rejoiced that Hitler's soldiers were better behaved than expected, French citizens from all walks of life were often willing to cooperate with the victors. French businessmen accepted German contracts without hesitation, encouraged by the Vichy authorities who saw this as a way of preventing German confiscation of French economic assets. In Paris, restaurants, theaters, and jewelry stores did good business entertaining the invaders. Leading actors and singers saw

nothing wrong with such contacts. Other French citizens eagerly took over the businesses and properties that Jews were forced to abandon under Vichy's policy of purging Jews from the French economy.

A small but highly visible group of political and intellectual figures, concentrated mostly in Paris, went beyond pragmatic, personal collaboration and openly supported Hitler's "New Order." These French fascists sought German support to create movements modeled on the Nazi party and actively pushed for French participation on Germany's side in the war. They criticized the Vichy government for being too conservative and too cautious about backing the Germans. Among the most prominent of these collaborationists were several dissident leftists who had split with their parties during the 1930s and tried to found movements more attuned to what they saw as the realities of the times. Examples were neosocialist Marcel Déat and ex-Communist Jacques Doriot, whose *Parti Populaire Française* was the only one of the wartime collaborationist movements to have any popular success. Doriot himself volunteered for service with the German forces on the eastern front.

Other collaborationists came from the ranks of the extreme right, attracted by the Nazis' anti-Communist propaganda or by the mirage of a united Europe in which France would enjoy an honorable second rank. A number of prominent writers, such as Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Drieu la Rochelle, and Robert Brasillach, convinced even before the war of the hopeless decadence of French culture, embraced what they saw as the youthful vitality of the Nazis. Ironically, the Germans, recognizing how unpopular the extreme collaborationist groups were with most of their fellow citizens, gave these French admirers little real backing. Instead, the Germans used the threat of shifting support to them as a way of extracting concessions from the Vichy government. Only when German military defeat had come to appear inevitable did the Paris collaborationists obtain a foothold in the French government.

Vichy's policies in France's overseas colonies are one of the clearest indications of the regime's true impulses. In these territories, the Germans had no influence. In regions as far apart as the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, the East African colony of Madagascar, and the southeast Asian colony of Indochina, Vichy appointees abruptly reversed the Third Republic's policies of assimilation and association and adopted policies based on notions of white racial superiority. In Guadeloupe, the effect was to strengthen the black population's loyalty to French republicanism, but in Madagascar and Indochina, Vichy's harsh measures ended local elites' willingness to cooperate with the French and instead drove them to begin organizing to achieve independence.

Changing Attitudes toward the Germans

By the time Laval had publicly called for a German victory in the war in 1942, changes in German policy and in the world picture were making collaboration less and less acceptable to the French population. In the summer of 1940, German victory in the war had seemed inevitable, but by the middle of 1942, it looked at least uncertain. The unexpected resistance of the British under the leadership of Winston Churchill, the German failure to overwhelm the Soviet Union after Hitler turned on Stalin in June 1941, and the entry of the United States into the conflict after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 left Hitler to face a coalition whose potential resources far exceeded his own. Furthermore, the German occupation had

become increasingly oppressive for the French. As more and more of France's food and industrial products were diverted to the Reich and as French civilians began to be drafted to work in Germany, French resentment against the occupation increased. The savage German repression following the first armed attacks on their troops in occupied France in the summer of 1941 shocked French opinion. So did the Vichy government's willingness to participate in the German-ordered execution of hostages through creation of "special section" courts in which normal legal safeguards were suspended. The beginning of deportations of Jews in the summer of 1942 also contributed to the growing dislike for the Germans; even French citizens who had accepted Vichy's own anti-Jewish measures were disturbed by the sight of whole families being treated like criminals and shipped to an unknown destination.

The turn in the tide of the war in November 1942 decisively altered the situation in France. In Russia, Soviet forces surrounded a German army at Stalingrad. In Egypt, the British defeated General Rommel's Afrika Korps at El Alamein. And in North Africa, on November 8, American forces landed in French territory in Morocco and Algeria. The French forces stationed there, loyal to the Vichy government, put up some initial resistance, but the Americans quickly negotiated a ceasefire with the former Vichy prime minister Darlan, who had accidentally been in Algiers at the moment of the landings. To the outrage of the French Resistance movement, well developed by that time, the Americans recognized Darlan as the legitimate authority in French North Africa. Only his assassination by a Resistance activist on December 24, 1942, ended the awkward situation in which a leading Vichy official had the support of an Allied government. In the meantime, the Germans had reacted to Vichy's "treason" by putting the whole of France under military occupation on November 11, 1942. As the troops of "Operation Attila" neared the Mediterranean coast, the French scuttled their last major military asset—the battle fleet in the harbor of Toulon. Its destruction marked the failure of Vichy's effort to maintain a semblance of French autonomy in Hitler's Europe.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Jean-Pierre Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 70.
- 2 Cited in Sarah Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution: Gender and Family Life in Postwar France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5.
- 3 Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.
- 4 Ibid., 197.

28 The Road to Liberation

Daily Life during the War

By the time the Germans occupied southern France in November 1942, the expectation of a short war ending in a German victory had long since been forgotten. As the war lengthened, living conditions in France became increasingly difficult. Despite the government's efforts to organize war production, shortages of vital raw materials and the reluctance of many workers to contribute to the German war effort led to a steady decline in industrial output. Food was also in short supply, as farmers could not obtain fertilizer and German requisitions skimmed off much of the crop. Rationing had been imposed in September 1940 and allocations were repeatedly reduced. To supplement their rations, city dwellers depended on packages from rural relatives or took to their bicycles, invading the countryside on weekends to bargain with peasants. If cases of outright malnutrition remained rare, it was largely thanks to the thriving black market where scarce items were available—but only for many times their legally fixed price. Fuel was also in short supply; the French shivered in the winter, and cars and buses had to be fitted out with bulging tanks that let them run on coal gas. In the absence of effective government controls, France suffered more severely from inflation than Germany, Britain, or the United States. Enforcement of regulations meant to equalize supplies was difficult in a situation where many considered evading the rules a manifestation of resistance to the Nazis.

For the first two years after the Armistice, most French who were neither Jewish nor among the groups forced from their homes as a result of German policies were not drastically affected by the war. While Britain suffered under German bombing and while much of Russia was laid waste by the German invasion, France enjoyed relative security. Even in the “occupied” northern zone, the Germans left most routine administrative tasks to French civil servants. Cultural life continued to flourish, despite a certain amount of censorship. Even writers who were later active in the Resistance, like Jean-Paul Sartre, continued to work without much interference. As Sartre later put it, “the Occupation was intolerable and ... we managed to tolerate it well enough.”¹ He was able to publish his major philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*, in 1943. To escape temporarily from the harsh realities of war and hunger, the population flocked to theaters and movie houses, whose audiences and profits soared. German production orders kept French factories running and unemployment was not an issue. But salaries did not keep up with inflation; employers often found it necessary to provide hot meals and other services to prevent discontent. Peasants who were able to conceal some of their production and sell it on the black market were frequently able to make modest

profits during the war, as were small shopkeepers. But the real profiteers were the small minority who sold wholesale to the Germans.

While most of the population tightened their belts but were not otherwise dramatically affected by the war, certain groups felt the full brunt of Nazi policies. The most harshly treated were the country's Jewish population. Forced to give up their jobs and often robbed of their property, many were left with no means of support. In June 1942, the Germans required all Jews in the occupied zone to identify themselves by wearing a yellow star on their clothes, and, as we have seen, deportations to the gas chambers at Auschwitz began in July 1942. After the German occupation of the Vichy zone in November 1942, Jews living there were also in danger. As they came to understand the peril facing them, French Jews learned to be more wary and more willing to evade the laws aimed at them. Nevertheless, it was a deep shock for Jewish citizens born in France to realize that their own country's government was discriminating against them, and that many of their fellow citizens were willing to look the other way rather than try to help them. Of the 300,000 Jews in France at the start of the war, over 75,000 were sent to the death camps, most via the sinister transit camp at Drancy outside of Paris. Compared to the Jewish populations in other occupied countries, a relatively large percentage of those living in France survived the war, thanks to the complications injected into the deportation process by the existence of Vichy, the aid provided by French fellow citizens, and their own initiative in evading capture. But no other segment of French society paid such a heavy toll during the war.

The Jewish population suffered because German policies classified them as an inferior race. The populations of Alsace and Lorraine were singled out because their region was considered racially German. Despite the armistice agreements, the region was effectively annexed to Germany in 1940. Much of the population was deported to the Vichy zone. The Germans invested heavily to make Strasbourg a great cultural center, and German colonists were imported to take over abandoned farms. The Alsatians were subject to German laws and to conscription for service in the *Wehrmacht*.

The Resistance and Charles de Gaulle

Although the majority of the French population initially accepted the defeat of 1940 and the Pétain government, a few isolated figures declared from the start that a German victory would mean the imposition of a morally and politically unacceptable regime. The most celebrated of these resisters was a junior member of Reynaud's last wartime cabinet, General Charles de Gaulle. As Pétain prepared to ask for an armistice on June 17, 1940, de Gaulle flew from Bordeaux to London. On the following day, the BBC radio broadcast his speech, urging his fellow citizens to recognize that "France has lost a battle, but she has not lost the war," and to continue the struggle. In the chaotic conditions of the moment, almost no one in France heard de Gaulle's "appeal of June 18." It would be many months before he gained a real following within the country, and the French Resistance movement was never simply a response to de Gaulle's leadership. Without de Gaulle's efforts, however, the Resistance's significance would have been quite different.

De Gaulle's first achievement was to obtain British recognition as the official representative of French interests in the war. For a few days after de Gaulle's broadcast, the British hesitated, hoping that Pétain's government might not entirely abandon the

war, but once that hope was dashed, the British leader Winston Churchill recognized his authority over the small number of French soldiers and sailors who refused to accept the armistice. The de Gaulle-Churchill relationship was to undergo many crises in the following years, but the combative Churchill recognized a kindred spirit in the French general. Thanks to the British, de Gaulle was able to set up the skeleton of a government-in-exile. The British government provided him funds and a daily radio program on the BBC. A small but growing number of escapees from occupied France joined his cause. The United States, not yet involved in the war, gave de Gaulle the cold shoulder and recognized Vichy as the legitimate French government until 1942.

Just as the Vichy government saw the France's overseas colonies as its most important strategic asset, the Free French movement saw them as the one arena in which it could establish itself. De Gaulle called on their French administrators to follow him. The first to respond was Félix Éboué, the black governor of the French colony of Chad, in central Africa, a member of the small *évolué* group that identified itself with France. With Éboué's help, de Gaulle was able to win over most of French Equatorial Africa; he could now claim to be more than just an exile whose territory was limited to Carlton Gardens, his headquarters building in London. But forces loyal to Vichy drove off a Franco-British naval expedition sent to Dakar, the capital of the larger and more strategically located colony of French West Africa, in September 1940. Despite this setback, de Gaulle was able to fly to Brazzaville, capital of French Equatorial Africa, and, on October 27, 1940, he announced the creation of the Council of Imperial Defense, the first step toward the creation of a counter-government opposed to the Vichy regime. By this time, he had also received support from some of France's other small colonies. In addition to West Africa, however, Vichy controlled the French possessions in North Africa and Indochina.

De Gaulle responded to the weakness of his position by taking the most intransigent possible positions in defense of French interests. At several points in 1941 and 1942, de Gaulle, head of a minuscule movement of exiles, "alone in the midst of well-supported partners, terribly poor among the rich" (as he later wrote in his *War Memoirs*, one of the classic books to come out of the war), indignantly threatened to break off relations with the British Empire when he thought his allies were seeking to expand their influence in France's overseas territories. To him, "what was at stake was not only the expulsion of the enemy from [France's] territory, it was also its future as a nation and a state."²

De Gaulle's prickly treatment of the British reflected a calculated policy to defend what he saw as France's vital interests. But it was also consistent with the personality of the man who was to become the most important figure in French political life for the next three decades. De Gaulle's willingness to go his own way owed something to his family background. His family had strong intellectual roots—his paternal grandmother had been a noted writer of women's books—and also a strong Catholic heritage. Despite his attachment to the Church, de Gaulle's father had defended Dreyfus's innocence and accepted the Republic. De Gaulle decided at an early age to enter the army, where his seriousness and his unusual height made him stand out. Wounded in August 1914, the young de Gaulle returned to combat as quickly as possible. Captured by the Germans at Verdun, he showed his devotion to what he conceived of as his duty by making repeated but unsuccessful efforts to escape. Ironically, it was Pétain himself who had recognized de Gaulle's abilities after the war and promoted his career, but

rather than loyally defending his mentor's ideas, de Gaulle became one of the few critics of the defensive mentality Pétain had infused into the French army.

De Gaulle's Catholic background, his military outlook, and his views on the importance of leadership might easily have inclined him to join one of the many rightwing movements of the interwar period, but he remained aloof from them. The success of the German *Blitzkrieg* vindicated his own ideas about technological warfare. He was briefly able to apply them, leading one of the few French tank units into combat in the hectic days of May 1940. His decision to fly to England on June 17, 1940, was of a piece with the character of a man who had long shown both his intense dedication to his country and his determination to think for himself. De Gaulle's belief in his cause was essential to the success of his wartime leadership, but it was at the same time a major obstacle in his dealing with others, who often experienced him as rigid and even dictatorial. Even volunteers eager to join his movement found him difficult. "So this is my leader: this cold, distant, impenetrable, rather antipathetic individual," an early recruit wrote.³

The Resistance in France

While de Gaulle struggled to impose himself as the legitimate representative of France's interests in world affairs, resistance to both the Germans and the Vichy government began to develop inside France. On June 20, 1940, a farmworker named Étienne Achavanne cut the telephone wires to a German field headquarters. Arrested and executed two weeks later, he was the first French resistance martyr.⁴ Other early acts of resistance were largely symbolic—chalking anti-German slogans on walls, or circulating hand-typed or mimeographed bulletins containing news from the BBC and exhortations to reject collaboration with the Germans. In the "occupied" north, where the German presence was direct, the choice between collaboration and resistance was clear-cut. In the Vichy zone, matters were more complicated; for some time, many considered it possible to resist the Germans while serving a regime that claimed to be upholding French sovereignty.

The brutal German repression of early Resistance groups, such as the circle led by several anthropologists at the Paris Museum of Man who founded one of the first Resistance periodicals, made it clear that the commitment to anti-German activism was a serious one. The earliest resisters tended to be young and had often participated in one or another of the numerous nonconformist movements of the 1930s. The movement attracted many supporters of the prewar left, but also activists from the social-Catholic milieu and even nationalists from the ranks of the *Action française* and the terrorist *Cagoule* group. French Jews were disproportionately represented in the Resistance, but most of them identified themselves as French patriots rather than as members of a distinct ethnic group. De Gaulle was not the only army officer who refused to accept the 1940 defeat. Henri Frenay, a young captain, became leader of *Combat*, one of the most important movements. Women were active in many Resistance groups from the start. Frenay's closest associate in *Combat* was his friend Berty Albrecht, a campaigner for women's right to birth control information in the 1930s. She took her own life after her arrest in 1943. Lucie Aubrac was one of the founding members of *Libération*, another important Resistance group in the southern zone. Marie Madeleine Fourcade, a charter member of the *Alliance* group (an important

source of secret intelligence for the Allies), took over the organization's leadership after the arrest of her male colleagues.

Germany's assault on the Soviet Union in June 1941 caused a major change in the composition of the French Resistance. The French Communist party, under Stalin's orders, had refused to back the war effort in 1939 and had referred to the conflict as a fight between "two gangsters" in 1940. The Vichy regime maintained the ban on the party imposed at the outbreak of the war, but some Communist Party leaders approached the Germans, hoping to gain permission to reopen the movement's daily newspaper. When the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, however, the French party abruptly reversed its policy. This shift was a relief to many of its rank-and-file members, who had never understood the pact between Hitler and Stalin. It also brought the Resistance the benefit of a well-organized movement with long experience in clandestine activities. The party could count on the loyalty of the numerous militants among immigrant workers in France, who were attracted by its internationalist orientation. Their movement, the Main d'Oeuvre Immigré, paid an especially heavy price for its Resistance activism.

The Communists' participation in the Resistance also caused strains in that movement, however. After their experience with the party's repeated policy reversals during the 1930s, many members of other groups had deep-seated suspicions of the Communists' motives. They also had a well-founded fear of Communist skill in infiltrating other groups. In the fall of 1941, the Communists' decision to launch direct attacks on German occupation troops was opposed by all the other Resistance groups. Communist killings of German officers, starting with the assassination of a naval lieutenant in the Barbès metro station in Paris in August 1941, brought frightful German reprisals. An example was the execution of 27 hostages, including the 17-year-old son of a Communist deputy, at Chateaubriant in October. Both de Gaulle and other resistance groups urged an end to such isolated attacks, which did little real damage to the Germans but took a high toll on French lives. The Communists responded that the German repression would drive more of the population into resistance.

By 1942, the internal Resistance movements had lost their early, spontaneous character and were becoming more organized. Regularly printed newspapers—sometimes published at night using the same equipment that served authorized publications during the day—replaced typed and mimeographed bulletins. In the south, the Resistance movements created regional networks and special branches to provide forged documents, undertake sabotage missions, and gather intelligence. In the north, the Communist-dominated *Front national* created a host of special organizations for different social and professional groups. Whether or not they were affiliated with organized Resistance movements, a growing number of French actively opposed the regime and helped its victims. In the Massif Central, the inhabitants of the little Protestant village of Chambon-sur-Lignon hid thousands of Jewish children in danger of deportation. Throughout the country, courageous housewives concealed downed Allied airmen and helped them make their way to the Spanish border and safety.

Both in France and in London, there was a growing sense of need for closer contact between de Gaulle's self-proclaimed government-in-exile and the groups working against Vichy and the Germans inside France. At the beginning of 1942, de Gaulle dispatched a representative, Jean Moulin, to enter France and try to unify the Resistance under his leadership. Initially, many Resistance activists were reluctant. Christian Pineau, head of *Libération-Nord* in the "occupied" zone, criticized de Gaulle's claims to authority, saying, "We took action without him ... He isn't in the country, and he

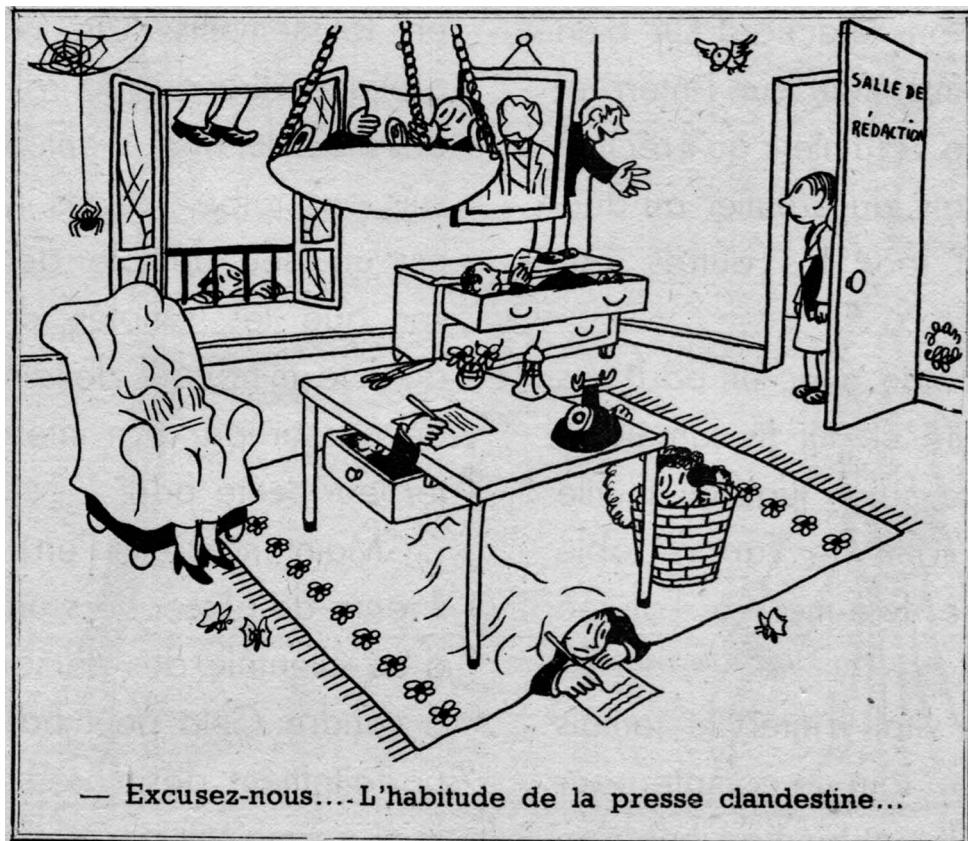


Figure 28.1 Memories of the Resistance

Jean Effel's cartoon, published shortly after the Liberation in 1945, reflected the pride Resistance activists took in their activities. The humorous drawing made light of the real danger that underground journalism involved. Many members of the Resistance were arrested, tortured, and executed for their actions. (From *Jours sans Alboches*, by Jean Effel. Copyright © Jean Effel and France Soir, Paris)

doesn't run the risks we do."⁵ When Pineau was smuggled out of France to meet with de Gaulle in March 1942, he was disturbed by the Free French leader's insistence that the democratic and republican Third Republic was as bad as the Vichy regime. But he and other Resistance leaders eventually recognized the need for unity, as well as the advantages of having access to the British-donated funds and equipment that de Gaulle's movement controlled. De Gaulle, for his part, realized that he needed to commit himself firmly to the restoration of democracy in order to win the support of the resistance activists in France. For non-Communist resisters like Frenay, de Gaulle provided the assurance that the party would not dominate the movement, as it sometimes seemed bent on doing. By April 1942, Moulin had secured agreement from the major Resistance groups to set up a unified Secret Army to support the Allied liberation of France when it finally occurred. He also established an Information and Press Bureau

to coordinate propaganda efforts and a General Study Committee to prepare position papers on the postwar reconstruction of France.

The Allied landings in French North Africa in November 1942 strengthened the bond between de Gaulle and the internal Resistance movements. The Americans, convinced that the troublesome Free French leader represented only himself, had refused to allow the Gaullists any role in the operation. They had dealt instead with one of de Gaulle's rivals, General Henri Giraud, an army officer who had made a spectacular escape from a German prisoner-of-war camp but who had refused to make a clear break with the Vichy government. When they found Admiral Darlan on the scene in North Africa, the Americans promptly entered into negotiations with him that lasted until his assassination. Giraud had no support among the internal Resistance movements, which strongly backed de Gaulle, but American and British pressure forced the latter to accept an uneasy compromise with his rival. Confident that the Resistance's loyalty would eventually turn the situation in his favor, de Gaulle agreed to join Giraud in setting up a provisional government in Algiers, but the experience did nothing to improve his opinion of his "Anglo-Saxon" allies.

In February 1943, Jean Moulin returned to France to hasten development of a structure that could eventually serve as the basis of a postliberation government. The German occupation of southern France, while it subjected the Resistance movements to more direct harassment from the Gestapo, had also clarified the political situation by making the Vichy government's subordination to the Germans unmistakable. Moulin was able to set up a National Resistance Council, including representatives of the major movements and of those political parties and movements that supported de Gaulle. The Germans arrested Moulin and several other top Resistance leaders in Lyon in June 1943, but the Council survived. Georges Bidault, a prewar Catholic activist, became its new head. The number of Resistance activists grew dramatically in the course of 1943 as thousands of young men sought to evade conscription for the *Service de Travail Obligatoire*, proclaimed by Laval in February 1943 in response to growing German demands for French labor. Rather than leave for Germany, many of those called up took to the woods in rural areas of France. These groups of *maquis*, so-called in reference to the scrubby vegetation of the hills in southern France, provided the Resistance for the first time with a mass base. But they lacked food, arms, and training, which the Resistance groups had to scramble to provide.

By 1943, support for the Vichy government was rapidly eroding. Those collaborationists who had compromised themselves too thoroughly to change sides continued to support the Germans with bitter determination, however. In December 1943, the Germans forced Laval to bring three of the leading Paris collaborationists, Marcel Déat, Philippe Henriot, and Joseph Darnand, into his cabinet. The most sinister of the three was Darnand, the leader of the *Milice*, a French police force formed to assist the Gestapo. The *Milice* ruthlessly hunted down Jews and Resistance members and was often more brutal than the Germans themselves. Its activities exacerbated the enmity between those who supported the Resistance movement and those who opposed it, and created an atmosphere close to civil war in some regions.

Meanwhile, in Algiers, de Gaulle gradually edged the politically inept Giraud out of the picture. In September 1943, de Gaulle convened a consultative assembly of representatives from the Resistance and prewar parties that had not participated in the Vichy regime. In June 1944, just before the Allied landings, the assembly proclaimed itself the

provisional government of France. Inside France, the National Resistance Council issued a "Program of Action" in March 1944 that promised that the country's liberation would bring about not just the restoration of democracy but also the nationalization of major industries and a comprehensive system of social security that would go beyond what the Popular Front government had enacted. A notable omission from the program was any mention of votes for women, still opposed by much of the country's political class.

As they looked ahead to creating a new government in France, de Gaulle and the Resistance leaders also laid out plans for the future of the French colonies. Colonial support had made de Gaulle's movement possible, and he assumed that a restored empire would be an integral part of postwar France. At the same time, however, he recognized that the support he had received from men like Félix Éboué had been premised on the conviction that a liberated France would grant its colonial populations a greater role in governing themselves and the Empire as a whole. Furthermore, the war had created new pressures for the end of colonialism. To head off dissent the British had already promised to grant India, their largest colony, independence after the peace. The United States, whose forces were occupying French North Africa, openly encouraged talk about the eventual independence of those territories. At the end of 1943, after the threat of a German conquest of the Middle East had vanished, France recognized the independence of Syria and Lebanon, originally promised in 1936. In a speech in the Algerian city of Constantine on December 12, 1943, de Gaulle announced reforms to give political rights to a minority of French-educated Algerians, along the lines of the Blum-Viollette proposal of 1937. This opening came too late: Ferhat Abbas, leader of the *évolues*, joined with the more radical supporters of Messali Hadj and Islamic groups to form a united front demanding full autonomy. A confrontation between France and the Muslim population of its most important overseas possession was becoming inevitable.

The situation in sub-Saharan Africa appeared more optimistic. In January 1944, de Gaulle convened a conference on the future of France's African territories in Brazzaville, the capital of French Equatorial Africa. He proclaimed that:

there will be no real progress if men in their native lands do not profit by it morally and materially; if they cannot raise themselves little by little to the level where they will be capable of participating directly in the management of their own affairs. It is France's duty to see to it that it shall be so.

While de Gaulle's language seemed to point toward the eventual autonomy of the colonies, the official recommendations that came out of the meeting were more cautious. They emphasized that there would be no break-up of the empire and that "the eventual creation, even in the distant future, of *self-government* for the colonies is to be set aside."⁶ Education in the colonies was to be given only in French. Nevertheless, the Brazzaville conference promised that colonial populations would be consulted about their future, and it also committed postwar France to abolishing the *loi de l'indigénat* of 1881, which had allowed French authorities to impose arbitrary punishments on inhabitants of the colonies. The Brazzaville conference excited new hopes throughout France's colonial possessions.

Liberation

Despite the activities of the Resistance and the determination of de Gaulle, it was obvious that the Germans could not be defeated until American and British forces landed on French soil. Under the direction of the American general Dwight Eisenhower, the Allies spent 1943 and the first months of 1944 preparing Operation Overlord—the massive amphibious landing that would start the liberation of France. The French Second Armored Division, part of the army de Gaulle had reconstituted in North Africa and that had seen action in the 1943 Allied campaign in Italy, was transported to Britain to participate in the assault. But de Gaulle was kept in the dark about Eisenhower's plans. Even in the face of growing evidence of de Gaulle's popularity, the Americans considered installing an Allied military government in liberated France and postponing recognition of a French government until after elections could be organized. For de Gaulle, the long-awaited D-Day landing in Normandy on June 6, 1944, was thus another test of his ability to maintain French sovereignty, not only against the Germans but also against his own allies. But the problem, in de Gaulle's mind, was even more complex, for he also feared the Resistance itself. Rumors were rife that the French Communists would try to take power as the Germans were driven out.

The internal Resistance groups had planned long in advance to assist the Allies. Directed by radio messages from London, they knocked out railroad lines, disrupted German communications, and ambushed German units marching toward the Normandy battlefield. Unfortunately, coordination with the Allies was less than perfect, and in some regions, the Germans inflicted heavy casualties on lightly armed *maquis* who had risen up in expectation of quick Allied support. Hundreds of Resistance fighters were killed in the mountainous Vercors plateau south of Grenoble in the bloodiest of these encounters. This added to the list of misunderstandings between the French and their wartime allies. French civilians also suffered heavily. Allied bombing raids before the landings, meant to paralyze transportation behind the German lines, inflicted many casualties. And in the weeks just after the landings, German troops harassed by the Resistance committed some of the worst atrocities of the war. The entire population of one village, Oradour, 642 men, women, and children, were among the victims of these German reprisals.

In the Norman towns the Allied armies wrested from the Germans after the first landings, de Gaulle quickly made a triumphant appearance. He immediately implemented the provisional government's plan for restoration of French civil authority by installing *commissaires de la République*—delegates with sweeping authority—in the liberated areas. Despite misgivings in Washington, Eisenhower recognized the impossibility of trying to dispute de Gaulle's authority. But disagreements between de Gaulle and the Allies were by no means at an end. When Allied forces finally broke out of the Normandy beachhead in late July and began a rapid advance across northern France, a new dispute developed about the fate of Paris. For military reasons, Eisenhower wanted to bypass the French capital. For political reasons, de Gaulle was determined to enter it as quickly as possible—before the Resistance forces, which he regarded as Communist-dominated, could install an independent government. When the Paris Resistance began an uprising on August 18, de Gaulle threatened to withdraw French forces from Allied command to rush them to the city. In the end, Eisenhower altered his plans. The French Second Armored Division and the first American forces reached Paris

on August 24. They found it largely intact, thanks to the German commander Dietrich von Choltitz's refusal to implement Hitler's orders to destroy its public buildings. On August 25, de Gaulle installed himself in the offices of the Ministry of War; on the 26th, he led a triumphal parade down the Champs-Elysées to Notre Dame Cathedral to celebrate the liberation. The war was still far from over—shots were fired just as the general, whose height made him a conspicuous target, was entering the church—but there was no further doubt about who would head the new French government.

A second Allied landing, Operation Anvil-Dragoon, on the Mediterranean coast on August 15 launched a rapid campaign up the Rhone valley, linking up with the forces that landed in Normandy on September 12. The French First Army made up an important part of the Anvil-Dragoon force. In the meantime, Resistance units took control of much of the southwest and the Massif Central, abandoned by the Germans as they retreated. They also helped contain pockets of German troops who remained in several major Atlantic ports until the end of the war. The battlefield moved north into Belgium, and the retreating Germans installed Pétain, Laval, and the remaining French advocates of collaborationism in the south German town of Sigmaringen. In Paris, de Gaulle's provisional government could begin to grapple with the problems of France's second postwar reconstruction in a generation.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Jean-Pierre Azéma, *De Munich à la Libération* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 153.
- 2 Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de Guerre* (Paris: Plon, 1954), 2:1.
- 3 Daniel Cordier, cited in Julian Jackson, *De Gaulle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 138.
- 4 Olivier Wievorka, *The French Resistance*, Jane Marie Todd, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1.
- 5 Cited in Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), 1:585.
- 6 Cited in D. Bruce Marshall, "Free France in Africa: Gaullism and Colonialism," in Prosser Gifford and William Roger Louis, eds., *France and Britain in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 716, 721.

29 The Revival of the Parliamentary Republic

The euphoria that accompanied the liberation of Paris in August 1944 was the prelude to a third attempt in less than ten years to make fundamental reforms in French institutions. Like the Popular Front and the Vichy regime, the leaders of what soon became France's Fourth Republic found this goal more difficult to accomplish than they had expected. Within a few years, the national consensus generated by the experience of German occupation had come apart, and the country—weakened by the ordeal of war—seemed as unable to cope with its problems as it had during the last years of the Third Republic. While its western European neighbors began to enjoy the benefits of peace, economic prosperity, and political stability that had eluded them between the wars, the French Fourth Republic teetered from one crisis to another, beleaguered by colonial wars, inflation, and political crises, until its collapse in 1958. Charles de Gaulle, the charismatic leader who had tried and failed to set his mark on the Fourth Republic at the outset, and who replaced it with his own regime when it fell, did much to contribute to the postwar regime's reputation as a failure. In hindsight, however, it is clear that many of the successes of the 1960s were built on foundations laid during the years from 1944 to 1958. The Fourth Republic lasted for half of the “30 glorious years” from 1945 to 1975, during which France took its place among the prosperous, democratic societies of the advanced industrial world. However, the significance of the changes that began in the late 1940s and early 1950s only became evident after the Fourth Republic had fallen.

The Provisional Government

Part of the reason for the rapid disillusionment with the Fourth Republic stemmed from the unrealistic expectations that prevailed at the time of the liberation. At the moment of de Gaulle's arrival in Paris, the country seemed united in its rededication to the fundamental republican values of liberty and social equality that had been so flagrantly disregarded by the Vichy regime. The mood in France was in tune with the atmosphere of the Allied crusade against Hitler, which had united the western democracies and the Soviet Union and raised hopes of a new era of world peace. Both in France and in the wider world, however, this apparent consensus concealed fundamental disagreements that were rapidly exacerbated when the difficulties of postwar recovery became apparent.

In France, there was a virtually unanimous consensus to reject the leaders and institutions who had led the country to catastrophe in 1940 and during the war. In a referendum in October 1945, 96 percent of the voters opposed a return to the

institutions of the Third Republic. These voters for the first time included women, who had been given the right to vote by de Gaulle's Provisional Government in Algeria in 1944, despite the hesitations of the Resistance movements on this point. The Vichy regime was even more discredited. Politicians who had voted to give power to Pétain in 1940 were barred from office. As the Allied armies advanced across France, the population and Resistance movements settled scores with those who had sided with the Germans. This spontaneous "purification," exaggerated in later years by opponents of the leftwing movements that dominated the Resistance, resulted in the execution of about 10,000 members of Vichy's Milice and other collaborators.

After Germany's surrender in May 1945, the leading Vichy officials were brought back and tried. De Gaulle commuted the death sentence imposed on the aged Marshal Pétain, but former prime minister Laval and a number of his colleagues were executed. Accusations that many leading industrialists had willingly worked for the Germans led to the nationalization of a number of large companies, such as the Renault auto firm and the coal mines in northern France. The printing plants of newspapers that had continued to publish under German censorship were turned over to journalists from the wartime Resistance press. In many communities, women accused of having had relations with German soldiers during the war were humiliated by being paraded through the streets after having their heads shaved. By singling out women, participants in these rituals were attempting to exorcise the fear that the Occupation had undermined French masculinity.

De Gaulle in Power

The apparent unanimity that underlay this rejection of the Third Republic and Vichy did not extend, however, to the remaking of France's political and social institutions. The activists of the internal Resistance, many of them genuinely heroic figures who had risked their lives in the struggle, dreamed of a new "hard and pure" republic, purged of corruption and inefficiency and committed to social justice. They wanted to preserve the spirit that had united Communists, Catholics, and Socialists in the Resistance, and to bury the dreary political quarrels of the Third Republic. Many wanted to create a single party representing the Resistance movement and capable of directing the new government. Already before the end of the war, however, the unity of the Resistance had begun to unravel. The Communist party's tendency to take over the institutions created to unite the movement drove supporters of other views to revive their old parties or create new ones. Furthermore, even though its ranks had been swelled by thousands of "11th-hour resisters" who had waited until the last minute to commit themselves, the Resistance was far from representing the entire population.

Charles de Gaulle, the political outsider who had succeeded in imposing himself as the nation's unquestioned leader by the time of the liberation, was among those who distrusted the idea that militants of the Resistance should now run the country. He was convinced that the popular enthusiasm that had greeted his arrival in France gave him a mandate broader than that of the Resistance. He was also convinced that France needed above all a government capable of defending its interests in the world arena. From the moment of his arrival in Paris—when he made a point of going first to the War Ministry offices before visiting the Hôtel-de-Ville (seat of the temporary city government set up by Resistance groups during the uprising against the Germans)—de

Gaulle emphasized his determination to put the restoration of authority first on his agenda. He did appoint a leading Resistance activist, the Catholic Georges Bidault, to head his Provisional Government, and selected ministers representing a cross section of Resistance movements, including the Communists. However, de Gaulle often seemed more concerned with curbing the Resistance movements' pretensions than with rewarding them for their contribution to the country's liberation. He ordered the immediate dissolution of the armed French Forces of the Interior, whose members were either to join the regular army or return to civilian life. On a tour of the provinces in September 1944, he often snubbed Resistance activists and made it clear that the new government drew its legitimacy from the support of the whole French people, not just from an activist minority.

The main motivation for de Gaulle's policy was fear of the Communists. Particularly in some areas of the southwest where local Resistance forces had driven the Germans out on their own, Communist activists dominated the new local administrations and acted as though they planned to create a power base to challenge the provisional government. De Gaulle was able to outmaneuver them both because he enjoyed broader popular support and because the Soviet leader Stalin soon made it clear that he opposed a Communist bid for power. Such a move would have run counter to his policy of conceding western Europe to the Americans and British while implanting Soviet-dominated regimes in the east. It would also have cost the French party the influence it expected to enjoy in the postwar government.

De Gaulle's main concern was to restore France to the rank of a major power. For this reason, he made great efforts to see that French units participated in the remaining campaigns of the European war. To the long list of his grievances against his "Anglo-Saxon" allies, de Gaulle added the complaint that they were not quick enough to provide the equipment for the new divisions he wanted to create. The presence of thousands of American troops on French soil created frictions not only with de Gaulle but with the French population. American soldiers, able to use their ample cigarette rations to obtain anything they wanted on the black market, were accused of treating French men with contempt and of regarding French women as easy conquests. While local French officials appealed to American military authorities to discipline their men, de Gaulle declared France's determination to retain all its prewar colonial possessions. To give himself more bargaining power with the western Allies, de Gaulle flew to Moscow in December 1944, hoping to revive France's old alliance with the Russians. But de Gaulle was not invited to the meeting of the "Big Three" at Yalta in February 1945, at which the overall shape of postwar Europe was largely determined. Nor was he invited to the Potsdam conference in July 1945 following the German surrender. For all of de Gaulle's efforts, France lacked the resources to claim a full place in the Grand Alliance. The effort to regain the rank of a great world power was to drain the country's resources throughout the postwar period and eventually put the fate of its democratic institutions in jeopardy.

Defining the Fourth Republic

Vital decisions about domestic policy had been postponed until the war had ended and elections could be held. The first postwar national elections in October 1945 produced a Constituent Assembly dominated by the three parties whose members had participated most actively in the Resistance, each of which won approximately

25 percent of the vote. The Communists emerged as the single largest party. They campaigned on a patriotic program, billing themselves as *le parti des fusillés* (the party of those sentenced to death by the Germans). Their very real role in the Resistance and their association with the Soviet Union, which had made such a contribution to the defeat of Hitler, had tremendously boosted their popularity. In addition, they had gained almost complete control of the CGT trade union confederation. There was nothing in the party's publicly avowed program to arouse controversy. Maurice Thorez, its leader, urged workers to participate in postwar reconstruction efforts, and abandoned the PCF's prewar support for independence movements in the colonies in order to endorse maintenance of the French empire. The Socialists (SFIO) also had a new momentum after the war. Aside from the elder statesman Léon Blum, the party had a new generation of leaders recruited during the Resistance, and broad support from voters who saw it as the best vehicle for defending both democracy and policies in favor of social equality. The two traditional leftwing parties now shared power with a new entrant on the French political stage, the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP). Largely but not exclusively Catholic, it incorporated the Christian-inspired element of the Resistance, and its leaders were committed to working with the Communists and Socialists in the postwar system. Its diversified electorate, however, included a number of conservative voters whose commitment to this kind of alliance was slight.

Relations between de Gaulle and the tripartite alliance that dominated the Assembly soon soured. De Gaulle favored a system in which the president—elected by the Assembly—would have broad powers to set and carry out policy. At a moment when memories of Pétain's authoritarian rule were fresh, such ideas alienated not only the deputies with whom he had to work but many of the voters as well. The majority of the Assembly preferred a system dominated by an elected parliament. Assuming the large, cohesive political parties that had emerged after the war would remain powerful, they did not anticipate a return to the unstable ministries of the Third Republic. In January 1946, de Gaulle challenged the parties directly by submitting his resignation. "I thought the French would soon call me back," he told a confidant a few years later.¹ Instead, the tripartite coalition reverted to the Third Republic practice of choosing a relatively undistinguished deputy to head the government. Opinion polls showed that the parliamentarians had considerable support. By a margin of 40 percent to 32 percent, the public regretted the departure of de Gaulle, but only 27 percent hoped to see him resume leadership of the government.

With de Gaulle gone, the politicians of the Assembly were free to draft a constitution that suited them. The two leftwing parties, loyal to a tradition of popular sovereignty dating back to the Convention of 1793, proposed a unicameral assembly with almost unlimited power. The MRP, noting that similar assemblies were becoming mechanisms for Communist domination in Eastern Europe, wanted the plan to include a second legislative chamber and a president with some real powers. When these proposals were rejected, the MRP joined the small centrist and conservative groups outside the coalition in urging voters to reject the plan. On May 5, 1946, the electorate, by 53 to 47 percent, did so, forcing the election of a second Constituent Assembly. In these elections, the MRP surged past the Communists to become the largest single party in France, while the Socialists suffered a distinct setback. De Gaulle made a dramatic intervention in the debate by proposing a presidential regime in which the elected

parliament would have had severely limited powers. The Assembly instead proposed a plan that looked much more like the constitution of the Third Republic. The constitution that established France's Fourth Republic gave most power to an elected Assembly, somewhat restrained by a Council of the Republic (a modified version of the Third Republic's Senate), and a president chosen by the two legislative bodies and authorized to nominate the prime minister. The new plan incorporated a number of provisions meant to prevent the repeated overthrow of cabinets that had often paralyzed Third Republic governments, but in practice, the Fourth Republic's political institutions ended up working much like those of its predecessor. The October 1946 referendum that approved this constitution showed, however, that many of the voters no longer believed that the design of the political system mattered much. Almost a third of the electorate failed to vote, and the new constitution received only 53 percent of the votes cast.

Reviving the Economy

By the time the new constitution was finally established, other issues—especially economic problems—dominated the public mind. The liberation had failed to stimulate a real recovery from wartime penury. The population continued to have to make do with inadequate rations of food and fuel, and industrial production in 1944 was only 38 percent of its level in the last peacetime year, 1938. At the time of the liberation, it had been politically impossible to deny French workers significant and long-overdue wage increases, but these and the general shortage of consumer goods unleashed runaway inflation. The Provisional Government rejected its first finance minister Pierre Mendés-France's proposal for rigorous measures to control the amount of money in circulation at the end of 1945. Wartime destruction made the recovery process a slow one. Although the loss of human lives had been less than in 1914 to 1918—French casualties from 1939 to 1945 totaled around 600,000, including 170,000 combat losses and 430,000 civilian deaths—physical destruction had been much more widespread. Seventy-four departments were classified as significantly affected, as opposed to 13 in 1918. Allied bombing, Resistance sabotage, and German demolitions had virtually paralyzed the nation's transportation system. France's damaged coal mines could not provide the fuel its factories needed. By 1947, industrial production had regained the 1938 level, but this was far from enough to satisfy the population's needs. In any event, workers' salaries were at least 30 percent lower than they had been before the war.

Already during the Vichy period, government experts had foreseen the need for a systematic reconstruction plan after the war. In this area, there was a strong element of continuity from the technocratic proposals of the 1930s to the postwar period, and a number of specialists who had served in the Vichy administration were kept on by the new government, especially if they had shifted their sympathies to the Resistance before the Liberation. Jean Monnet, one of the prewar planning advocates, who had spent most of the war in the United States and witnessed firsthand the effectiveness of American wartime economic mobilization, became the key figure in directing postwar recovery. The liberation government made him the head of a *Commissariat du Plan* in January 1946. Eschewing a centralized "command economy" on the model of the Soviet Union, Monnet instead emphasized voluntary cooperation of business and labor, whose representatives worked with government experts to establish economic priorities

and overcome bottlenecks standing in the way of growth. From the start, Monnet was determined to see that the French economy was not just rebuilt but also significantly modernized. The first plan, published in 1947, emphasized the economic infrastructure, setting targets for investment in energy, transportation, and heavy industry. It charted a promising path for French economic growth, but the benefits were to come only in the future. To provide the experts needed to direct the country, the postwar government established the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA), meant to train officials who would be dedicated to the principles of rational state intervention in the economy. Graduates of the highly selective ENA continue to dominate French politics, administration, and big business even today.

In contrast to its policy after the First World War, when the United States had demanded that France repay wartime loans as quickly as possible, the American government offered much-needed financial aid for the restoration of the French economy through the Blum-Byrnes accord, negotiated in May 1946. This agreement was a sign that American involvement in French affairs would remain extensive in the postwar period. As part of the agreement, American negotiators insisted that France open its market to exported American products. The section of the agreement concerning film imports was especially controversial. Fearing that domestic films would be driven off French screens by Hollywood imports, a broad coalition formed to demand special protections for the country's cultural products. After prolonged negotiations, an accord was reached to increase time reserved for French films. This dispute was just the first of many that would grow out of the enlarged American presence in France resulting from the war.

The French government's ability to influence the economy was increased by the program of nationalizations carried out during the period of the Provisional Government. By early 1946, several major banks, the bulk of the insurance industry, the gas and electric networks, and the Paris public transportation system had been nationalized. This movement continued a trend toward increased state involvement in the economy begun well before the war, but it did not create a state-controlled economy along Soviet lines. The managers appointed to run the newly nationalized companies were usually experienced businessmen, and the state-owned companies continued to be run much like private, profitmaking enterprises. Alongside the program of nationalizations, the liberation government enacted several social reforms meant to implement Resistance hopes for a more just and equal society. Trade unions, repressed during the war, regained their freedom, and factory committees with worker representatives, set up under the Popular Front but abolished under Vichy, were reestablished.

In line with the promises made in the Resistance movement's program, the new constitution incorporated a list of "social and economic rights" that outlined the features of a comprehensive welfare state, promising all citizens health care, education, the right to a decent job, the right to "time for rest and leisure," and an adequate income for those unable to work. Even before the war, there had been steps in this direction, notably the 1928 law creating a state-sponsored system of medical insurance, the 1936 law on paid vacations, and the inauguration of a system of family allowances in 1939. Pierre Laroque, the chief architect of the postwar welfare system, had hoped to combine all these programs into one centrally administered social security system. Opposition from various interest groups resulted instead in a complicated arrangement in which family allowances, medical insurance, and

pension programs for various occupational groups were run separately. The result was a system that came in time to cover almost all French citizens, but which cost more to administer than that of many other European countries. On the other hand, by accommodating the special interests of groups with different notions of their needs, these arrangements did insure broad support for the program. Only in the very different conditions of the late twentieth century did the principles of the postwar welfare system come under severe criticism.

The Turning Points of 1947

As the year 1947 began, it was by no means certain that the French population would be patient long enough for Monnet's plan to succeed and for democratic institutions to take solid root again. Workers' strikes and housewives' street protests against rising prices became increasingly frequent. It was partly in this context that the postwar tripartite coalition finally broke apart. But the relations between the Communist party and its coalition partners had become strained for other reasons as well. Throughout the world, the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union was hardening into a "cold war." In eastern Europe, Communist parties under Soviet domination had ousted non-Communists from new governments set up in 1945, while in the west, the Communists had already been evicted from postwar coalitions in Italy and Belgium. The French government, which included Communist cabinet ministers but was dependent on U.S. economic aid to carry out the ambitious Monnet plan, was in an awkward situation. Not that the Americans—as some French leftists subsequently alleged—directly forced the expulsion of the Communists from the French government, but their attitude favored such a course. When the Communist ministers (unwilling to openly oppose workers' protests) voted in May 1947 against the government's refusal to grant wage increases in the nationalized Renault factories, the Socialist prime minister Paul Ramadier expelled them from his government.

The breakup of the tripartite coalition, together with de Gaulle's resignation 16 months earlier, marked the end of the liberation's direct impact on French politics. Both the men most identified with the Resistance and the party that had contributed the most to it were now in the opposition, and destined to remain there for the remainder of the Fourth Republic. Ramadier's government and its successors until 1952 labeled themselves representatives of a "Third Force," based on a coalition between the Socialists and the MRP and standing between the Communists on the left and the new movement—the *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (RPF)—that de Gaulle launched in April 1947. The RPF, which was frankly anti-Communist, was bent on replacing the Fourth Republic with a presidentialist regime. The movement's devotion to a charismatic leader and de Gaulle's condemnation of parliamentary democracy reminded many observers of Bonapartism or fascism, even though de Gaulle rejected any idea of taking power by extralegal means. For a brief moment in 1947, when the RPF swept municipal elections in France's largest cities, it appeared that he would win through the ballot box. By the time the next national elections were held in 1951, however, the RPF lost much of its momentum. Nevertheless, the potential threat of a Gaullist election success weakened the "Third Force" governments as they tried to navigate between the Communists on the left and the RPF on the right.

The Marshall Plan

If the Fourth Republic avoided succumbing to these perils, the main reason was its success in overcoming the economic crisis of the postwar years—a success closely linked to the American decision to support European economic recovery. Jean Monnet's planning efforts had outlined the path to economic growth and modernization, but France was critically short of resources to implement his ideas. Ever since the liberation, France had had to borrow heavily from the United States to finance imports of food and raw materials. The 1946 Blum-Byrnes agreement had provided temporary help, but the massive trade deficit between the two countries threatened to undermine the franc and block recovery. American secretary of state George Marshall's announcement in June 1947 of the much broader foreign aid program that came to bear his name offered a solution to the French dilemma. In exchange for agreeing to economic cooperation with its western European neighbors, France obtained American grants and loans to finance the beginnings of its economic revival.

To a remarkable extent, the American money came without entangling strings. The French government's Fund for Modernization and Investment provided some 60 percent of the credits invested in the economy from 1947 to 1950, emphasizing improvement of the transportation system, expansion of energy resources and the steel industry, and modernization of agriculture. Although the inflation that had begun with the war continued to plague the economy, by 1950 the physical damage caused between 1940 and 1944 had largely been repaired and key industrial sectors were ready for further growth. Wages still lagged behind prices, and French workers had to make their own sacrifices to aid recovery by working longer hours, but a sense that economic conditions were on the road to improvement blunted the acute unrest of 1946 to 1947 and the potential threat to democracy that had accompanied it.

The Marshall Plan served to tie the western European countries that participated in it more firmly into an American-led anti-Communist bloc. Within France, the growing divide between the Communist party and its former partners in the Resistance coalition had many repercussions. The trade union movement, precariously united in 1936 and again in 1944, splintered once more at the end of 1947. In April 1948, non-Communist unionists who had quit the CGT to protest Communist control founded a new labor federation, the *CGT-Force Ouvrière*, or FO. Schoolteachers, one of the largest unionized groups, set up their own independent *Fédération de l'Education Nationale* (FEN). The CGT remained the largest labor organization. Despite its revolutionary rhetoric, its leaders learned to negotiate successfully, especially in the large enterprises nationalized after the war. But the division of the union movement weakened workers' positions, and the CGT's identification with the Communists kept the most militant sector of the workforce isolated from the rest of French society.

French Foreign Policy

The effects of the cold war were equally evident in France's foreign policy. By the end of 1947, French leaders had to abandon the keystone of their independent foreign policy in Europe: the attempt to keep Germany weak and limit its economic redevelopment. The French occupation zone in the western part of the country was integrated with those of the American and British to form what soon became the Federal Republic of Germany, which had full autonomy over its own domestic affairs. The Soviets retaliated by creating

the rival German Democratic Republic in their occupation zone in the east. Although French spokesmen initially balked at American efforts to organize western Europe into an anti-Communist military alliance, the Soviet blockade of West Berlin in 1948 to 1949 made the Communist menace seem too threatening to be ignored. In July 1949, the Assembly ratified the agreement making France a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Stepped-up American pressure following the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 forced France to accept the creation of a West German army to assist in the defense of western Europe. The “Third Force” governments thus accepted France’s position as a partner in a broad western alliance, led by the United States, in which a revived Germany played a major role.

Even before the beginning of German reunification, France and Germany had begun to move toward economic cooperation. The leading French architect of this policy was the MRP politician Robert Schumann, who occupied the Foreign Ministry in several successive cabinets from mid-1948 to early 1953. He found a responsive partner in West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, who was eager to end his country’s isolation and anchor it solidly to the other western European democracies. In 1951, France, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) formed the European Coal and Steel Community, allowing free trade in those crucial industrial commodities; it was the first step on the road that would lead to the European Union. Cooperation in other areas proved touchier, however. Faced with the inevitability of German rearmament, French premier René Pleven had proposed in 1949 creation of a European Defense Community (EDC) with a common army as a way of avoiding the re-creation of an independent German military. Within France itself, the proposal proved violently controversial. The Communists denounced it as a plot against the Soviet Union, and a strong “neutralist” current, represented by the most influential of the new newspapers created after the war—the daily *Le Monde*—argued that France’s security would be better assured by staying out of potential American-Soviet conflicts. De Gaulle and the RPF opposed the abandonment of French sovereignty over its own armed forces. In the end, opposition within France scuttled the plan, but not before it had served to undermine several successive ministries and highlight the Fourth Republic’s inability to handle difficult issues.

The French Union and the Indochina War

At the start of the war, in 1940, the doomed Third Republic had issued a special postage stamp showing a map of “France overseas,” emphasizing the importance of the colonies. The Vichy regime had reissued a stamp of the same design in 1941. In 1945, the Provisional Government released a third version of the same stamp, showing that it still saw France’s overseas territories as vital to the country’s future. But the war made it impossible to restore the old colonial system. North Africa’s Muslim populations were increasingly impatient with French rule. In France’s sub-Saharan African territories, the Brazzaville conference’s promise of sweeping changes had created new expectations. At the end of the war, France’s colony of Vietnam had achieved independence: after the withdrawal of Japanese forces in August 1945, a nationalist movement led by the Communist Ho Chi Minh, which had received some American aid during the war, took control of the country. To retain France’s colonies, the Fourth Republic had to find a way of convincing their peoples that democracy could be combined with an imperial system. Events were to show that this was an impossible challenge.

The Constituent Assembly that drew up France's new constitution in 1946 also proclaimed the transformation of the Empire into a "French Union" of supposedly equal peoples. Napoleon III's 1854 law excluding the colonies from constitutional protection was finally abrogated, and all inhabitants of France's overseas territories were declared to be French citizens with legal rights, including the right to vote for assemblies to govern their territories. This change abolished the 1881 *code de l'indigénat*. Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana, and the Indian Ocean island of Reunion, the "old colonies" from France's prerevolutionary empire, were granted the status of departments, putting them on the same basis as the metropolitan territory. The autonomy promised by the statutes of the French Union did not include the right for overseas territories to declare themselves independent, however, and even before the new system went into effect, the French government had shown that it would use force to maintain its control over them. Insurrections in parts of Algeria in May and June of 1945 were bloodily repressed. In Indochina, de Gaulle's Provisional Government dispatched troops who restored French rule in the southern part of the country. The French officials sent to Vietnam differed sharply over how to deal with Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh movement. Jean Sainteny, a civil administrator, negotiated an agreement under which Ho Chi Minh would form a government in the northern part of the country, a referendum would be held in the southern provinces to decide whether they would accept Viet Minh rule, and Vietnam would remain in the French Union. Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, named governor-general of French Indochina, scuttled this plan, driving the Viet Minh to launch an attack on French forces in December 1946. Hostilities quickly escalated into a full-scale war.

From 1947 to 1954, French troops from the professional army and the French Foreign Legion fought a frustrating struggle against the Viet Minh guerrillas. Like the United States in its own war in Vietnam 15 years later, the French government tried to keep the war limited. Fearing the reaction of a public largely indifferent to the matter, it did not commit draftees to the fight. American financial aid kept the war from completely unbalancing the French budget, but it was a steady drain on national resources. Its purpose also became increasingly unclear. In 1948, the French conceded the eventual independence of Vietnam, recognizing a native government headed by the non-Communist Bao Dai. But the French military, its prestige tarnished by the defeat of 1940, remained grimly determined to restore its reputation in the field. And French leaders agonized that concessions in Vietnam would force them to grant independence to colonies closer to home—particularly possessions in North Africa.

While the war in Indochina dragged on, the Fourth Republic also had to deal with resistance in other colonies. A nationalist uprising in Madagascar in 1947 was suppressed, at a cost of perhaps 80,000 deaths. Also in 1947, the French parliament passed a new statute for the government of Algeria. It foresaw the election of an Algerian assembly, half of whose members would be chosen by the French settlers and the small minority of Muslim Algerians who had qualified for French citizenship, while the other half would be chosen by the more numerous Muslim population. To safeguard the position of the European inhabitants, a two-thirds majority in this assembly was required to pass legislation. This gave deputies representing the 922,000 Europeans the power to veto measures supported by the representatives of the nearly 8 million Muslim Algerians. The rival Algerian nationalist movements all

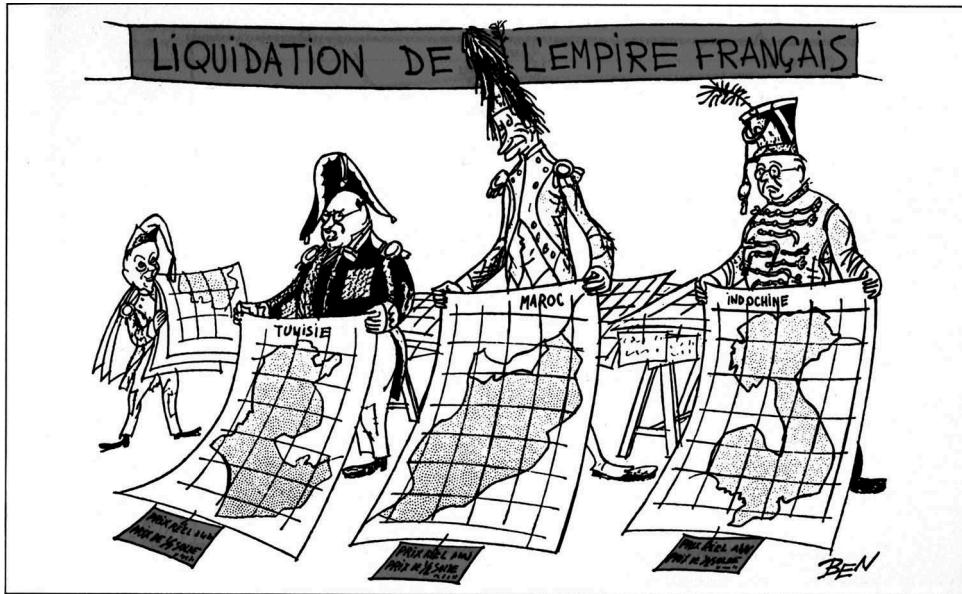


Figure 29.1 The Liquidation of the French Empire

France's inability to win the war in Indochina made it clear that it would not be able to maintain its overseas empire. Conservative nostalgics like this cartoonist accused the government of conducting a “clearance sale” of the colonies, but the rising tide of anti-colonialism around the world was too strong for the country to resist. (Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo)

rejected this arrangement. To break their resistance, the French governor manipulated the elections to secure a loyal majority among the Algerian deputies, showing that Paris was willing to ignore democratic rules to protect the colonists. In sub-Saharan Africa, where there were few French settlers, postwar tensions were not as great, but educated members of the black population also began organizing to demand self-government. A France preoccupied with rebuilding its own society faced an increasingly difficult challenge in maintaining its rule over its overseas territories.

Note

1 Cited in Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle, v. 2: Le Politique* (Paris: Points, 2001), 2:249.

30 From the Fourth to the Fifth Republic

By the early 1950s, high hopes inspired by the liberation had evaporated. Disillusionment with the changes made after the war paved the way for a steady shift toward more conservative ministries, culminating in that of Antoine Pinay in 1952. Pinay, a classic economic liberal, gained durable popularity with middle-class investors by emphasizing budget cuts and offering government bonds guaranteed against inflation, but his policies discouraged economic investment. Bedeviled by inflation, the exasperating debate over the European Defense Community, and conflicts overseas, one ministry followed another without giving the country any sense of direction.

The “Sartre Years”

While Fourth Republic politics appeared to be reverting to the patterns of its prewar predecessor, the heady experience of the Resistance, the liberation, and the confrontations accompanying the Cold War stimulated intense, sometimes feverish activity among French intellectuals. In their own eyes, at least, Paris was once again the world’s center of thought and debate. In retrospect, however, what is most striking about the thought of the “Sartre years” is the degree to which absorption in politics blinded French intellectuals to the important social and cultural changes taking place around them.

The Resistance activists had looked forward to a cultural and intellectual renewal as well as a political and social one. The liberation witnessed a backlash against the writers and performers who had collaborated with the Germans. Some notorious figures, such as author Robert Brasillach, were executed or—like the pro-Fascist novelist Drieu la Rochelle—committed suicide. All newspapers that had continued to publish under German rule were confiscated and their printing plants turned over to journalists from the underground Resistance press. The most lasting result of this measure was the creation of a new daily paper, *Le Monde*. It succeeded in giving expression to the Resistance dream of a press independent of the economic interests and petty political concerns that had colored the prewar dailies, and that soon reasserted themselves in many postwar newspapers. Under the direction of a remarkable editor, Hubert Beuve-Méry, *Le Monde* became France’s “newspaper of record,” respected for the thoroughness and honesty of its reporting and the independence of its political judgments. The postwar atmosphere was favorable to a renewal of some of the populist experiments of the Popular Front era. Theater producer Jean Vilar’s *Théâtre national populaire* undertook to bring quality productions of important plays to a broad audience. Vilar also inspired the annual Avignon cultural festival, a tradition that continues today.

The most visible effect of the liberation, however, was to bring to prominence a new generation of intellectuals inspired by the ideal of political commitment. The most celebrated of the postwar generation was Jean-Paul Sartre, philosopher, novelist, and dramatist, who came to epitomize, in France and abroad, the notion of the committed intellectual. His prewar novel, *Nausea*, showed him wrestling with the problem of finding meaning in a world without purpose. The wartime years, which Sartre experienced in occupied Paris, led him to define a doctrine of commitment: people, and especially intellectuals, must give meaning to their existence by their freely chosen devotion to causes such liberty and justice. Sartre defined his “existentialism”—the term and the philosophical tendency it represented had already begun to emerge in the interwar years—in a lengthy philosophical treatise, *Being and Nothingness*. But he expressed himself most effectively in plays laden with intellectual messages. He exalted the importance of intellectual activity—“The committed writer knows that words are actions,”¹ he proclaimed—and sought to make his life exemplify his thought through his active participation in political debate. His well-publicized relationship with his longtime companion Simone de Beauvoir, in which they rejected conventional marriage, lived separately, and granted each other the right to pursue other sexual relationships while maintaining an intense intellectual partnership and a deep personal loyalty, constituted an open challenge to French bourgeois values.

The existentialist group of which Sartre and the journal *Les Temps Modernes* (which he edited) were the center were—like most intellectual movements—loosely structured and frequently divided. The issue of how to translate commitments embraced during the Occupation into postwar political terms divided Sartre from his Resistance comrade Albert Camus, for example. Camus, who, like Sartre, wove his philosophical concerns into plays and novels, such as *The Plague*, came to fear that even the political currents of the Resistance era could become tyrannical orthodoxies. The public break between the two men and their “two ways of dealing with life,” in 1952, was front-page news in the daily press and marked the end of the spirit of unity generated by the Resistance.² Sartre went on to make an arduous effort to reconcile existentialism and Marxism on a theoretical level, and endorsed the Soviet Union, even though he never joined the Communist Party. He was hostile to the American influence in Europe, both because it represented political domination and because American culture seemed to him imbued with mindless materialism. Anti-Americanism was not limited to intellectuals. The very extent of postwar France’s dependence on the United States, which continued to have troops stationed on French soil, fostered a wider resentment of American influence. In the early 1950s, the Coca-Cola Company’s attempt to introduce its product brought together an unlikely coalition that included both Communist militants and wine growers who feared that soft drinks would reduce the market for the traditional French beverage. These opponents were able to obstruct the widespread marketing of this symbol of the American way of life for several years.

In retrospect, much of Sartre’s thought has come to appear as closely tied to the troubled atmosphere of the postwar years as the exaggerated campaign against Coca-Cola. The writings of Camus, less directly political, and of the liberal social and political thinker Raymond Aron (a one-time classmate and longtime critic of Sartre’s), now have greater appeal. So, too, does the work of Sartre’s companion Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, an analysis of the unique features of women’s life experience and their consequences, published in 1949, is one of the founding texts of modern

feminism. Beauvoir's *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, issued in 1958, provided a scathing critique of bourgeois society's treatment of women. There is no doubt, however, that Sartre dominated the French intellectual scene for a decade or more after the war. His intellectual rigor, his unwillingness to compromise his intellectual independence—in 1964, he rejected the Nobel Prize for Literature, which Camus had received in 1957, because he claimed it would undermine his criticism of existing institutions—and his embrace of unpopular causes made him a major public figure.

The Mendès-France Experiment

While committed intellectuals set the tone of intellectual debate, the Fourth Republic's politicians continued to grapple with the problems of the postwar era. A humiliating defeat overseas in 1954 led to the elevation of a determined political leader who tried to set the Republic on a new course. The defeat came in Vietnam, where the French, frustrated by their inability to overcome Ho Chi Minh's forces, tried to lure their opponents into a set-piece battle around a fortified outpost called Dienbienphu, expecting to annihilate the guerrillas with air power and artillery. Instead, the Viet Minh troops, supplied with heavy weapons by their Chinese Communist allies, overwhelmed the French and forced their surrender in May 1954.

Dienbienphu plunged the government into yet another parliamentary crisis. To surmount it, a majority of deputies were willing to suspend their quarrels and support a leader with a clear policy for ending the war—the maverick Radical Pierre Mendès-France. Of Jewish origin, Mendès-France had been active in French politics since the early 1930s, but had always remained aloof from the major parties. A courageous member of the Resistance during the war, he had advocated a policy of rigorous austerity and concentration on industrial modernization after the liberation, and had repeatedly denounced the shortcomings of subsequent Fourth Republic governments. Unlike Charles de Gaulle, the other “strong man” waiting in the wings, Mendès-France wholeheartedly supported parliamentary government. He believed that the Fourth Republic's institutions could be made to function with leaders of sufficient energy and integrity.

Mendès-France became prime minister primarily on the basis of his promise to bring a quick end to the disastrous war in Indochina. On taking office, he swore to reach a negotiated settlement with the Viet Minh within 30 days or resign. The agreement reached in July 1954 at Geneva provided for the French to withdraw from Vietnam. That country was divided between a Communist regime north of the 17th parallel and a non-Communist government in the south. Even Mendès-France's loudest critics saluted him for disengaging the country from an impossible quagmire under relatively favorable conditions. The protection of the non-Communist south was left to a new patron, the United States, which confidently assumed its resources would enable it to succeed where France had not. Determined to clear the decks of other nagging foreign policy problems so he could concentrate on domestic issues, Mendès-France also granted autonomy to Tunisia. And he let the Assembly vote on the European Defense Community, an issue so controversial that no previous Fourth Republic prime minister had been willing to submit it to parliament. The deputies killed the plan, ending several years of uncertainty. The French government then moved rapidly to negotiate an arrangement with its western partners that permitted German rearmament and participation in the NATO alliance, without the creation of a supra-national army.

Mendès-France had hoped not only to break the deadlocks on foreign affairs that had paralyzed France for years, but also to give a new impetus to domestic institutions as well. Through personal addresses to the country on the radio (modeled after American president Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats" during the Depression), he sought to build support for an aggressive program of industrial and agricultural modernization based on the successes of post-liberation planning and investments. In his desire to shake up a country, which he regarded as still too comfortable with its old ways, he challenged widespread taboos. His denunciation of alcoholism and his effort to promote milk drinking inspired furious protests from defenders of the wine industry. For a generation of young French students and politicians, Mendès-France's efforts to break with the past served as an inspiration. But the parliamentary institutions of the Fourth Republic made it an uphill struggle for him to enact his program. Once he had extricated France from the crises of Indochina and the EDC, traditional political patterns reasserted themselves. In February 1955, a vote of no confidence in the Assembly brought the Mendès-France experiment to an end.

Despite this setback, the seven months of Mendès-France's term in office had raised hopes that the Fourth Republic might be on the way to enjoying the stability and prosperity of the other western democracies. His successor, Edgar Faure, continued many of Mendès-France's initiatives in economic policy and negotiated settlements paving the way for independence of two of France's major North African colonies, Morocco and Tunisia. By this time, both French public opinion and most business interests were ready to accept the idea of independence for most of the former colonies. The era of imperialism was visibly coming to an end, and the colonies' economic importance was diminishing as France turned toward increasing its connections with its European neighbors. The Faure government gave renewed impetus to the process of European economic integration. Negotiations set in motion in 1955 led to two important treaties ratified after the Faure government's collapse: creation of Euratom, a joint agency for the development of nuclear energy, in 1956, and the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The latter provided for the eventual establishment of a common market without tariff barriers among the six western European countries belonging to the coal and steel association. These agreements linked France more closely to its European neighbors and made any retreat to the protectionist tariff policies of the Third Republic more difficult. The need to make French industries competitive with those of its neighbors provided a continuing stimulus to the process of economic modernization.

The Algerian War

In 1955, however, the process of European integration was just beginning, and the French public scene was dominated by other problems. The most important was the spreading nationalist revolt in Algeria. On November 1, 1954, a militant Algerian independence movement, the National Liberation Front (known by its initials in French as the FLN), launched an armed campaign to drive the French out. The leadership of the movement came from young militants impatient at the lack of success of the older leader Messali Hadj. Hadj's movement still had considerable support, however, and bloody battles between these rival Algerian groups added to the horror of the war that grew out of the revolt. To the French, Algeria was different from their other colonies. It was close geographically, it had belonged to France for a longer period, it had an

important population of French settlers—the *colons* or *pieds noirs* (black feet), whose families had often lived there for several generations—and it was, according to French law, an integral part of the nation. Even Mendès-France, committed to separating France from Indochina, had swiftly proclaimed his intention to combat the uprising. “Algeria is France,” he told the National Assembly.

By the end of 1955, the Algerian war had come to dominate French politics. Unlike the conflict in Indochina, the struggle against the FLN soon required the use of draftees doing their required military service, as well as of the soldiers of the professional army. The United States, convinced of the inevitability of independence for the countries of North Africa, gave France no economic or diplomatic support; the expense of the war accelerated inflation to new levels. At home, the combined impact of war, inflation, and the efforts pursued by Mendès-France and Faure to make the economy more efficient set off a new rightwing protest movement reminiscent of the quasi-Fascist leagues of the 1920s and 1930s. Its central figure was Pierre Poujade, a small shopkeeper from the poor and backward Massif Central region. He accused the government of favoring big business at the expense of small enterprises, and found broad support for his program of resistance to taxes and militant defense of French positions in Algeria. Among Poujade’s supporters was a young man named Jean-Marie Le Pen, who would later lead the rightwing *Front National* party that has been a major factor in French politics since the 1980s.

Hoping to obtain a stronger mandate for his government, Edgar Faure called early parliamentary elections for January 1956. The results proved fatal for the Fourth Republic. The Communists remained the largest single party, the extremist Poujade movement obtained almost 12 percent of the vote, and the distribution of seats made it impossible to form a stable ministry. Many deputies supported the reappointment of Mendès-France, but the traditional parties blocked him and installed the leader of the SFIO, Guy Mollet, instead. Mollet represented a party with a long tradition of adherence to democratic values, but the policy he followed in Algeria contradicted them. After *pied-noir* protesters in Algiers pelted him with tomatoes, he abandoned promises of reforms in favor of the Muslim population and gave the army free rein to put down the rebellion. The military leaders, humiliated by their defeat in Indochina and egged on by the *colons*, responded to the FLN’s often bloody terrorist attacks with savage countermeasures. These included the systematic use of torture to force captured rebels to provide information; French dissidents who questioned the army’s tactics were also tortured and, in some cases, killed. The civilian governments of Mollet and his successors knew of these excesses but were unwilling to confront the commanders who insisted that the revolt could not be defeated “with the procedures of a choir boy,” as General Bigeard put it.³ In October 1956, the French violated international law by intercepting an airplane carrying several FLN leaders and imprisoning them in France. International opinion sided with the Algerian movement. France found itself even more isolated after it joined with Britain and Israel in November 1956 to launch an invasion of Egypt, whose leader Gamal Abdel Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal earlier that year. The French had hoped to punish Egypt for supporting the Algerian rebellion, but combined American and Soviet opposition forced a quick end to the Suez operation.

In metropolitan France, the government sought to smother growing protests with methods uncomfortably reminiscent of those used by the Germans during the Second World War. The protest movement, which grew up largely outside the structure of

established parties—even the Communists, normally anticolonialist, hesitated to engage themselves—took on the dimensions of another Dreyfus affair. Many of the protesters were leftists attracted to Marxism but disillusioned by both the Socialists (committed to pursuit of the war) and the Communists. The latter's image had been severely tarnished in 1956 by Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's revelation of Stalin's crimes and by the Soviet military intervention to put down a popular revolt in Hungary, one of the East European countries it had occupied at the end of the Second World War. Other protestors came out of the Catholic democratic tradition that had been so important in the Resistance. Together, these activists formed the origin of what came to be known as the "Second Left," a milieu committed to egalitarianism, social justice, and opposition to colonialism, but critical of the established political parties. Attempts to create a new party to represent this "Second Left" had limited success, but these tendencies had a noticeable impact on the press and the universities. Supporters of the war, an equally diverse group ranging from ex-Fascists to former Resistance members like Georges Bidault, who equated the defense of French Algeria with the defense of national independence, were equally active.

As the sense of crisis deepened, public confidence in the ability of the Fourth Republic's institutions to cope with it diminished. Opinion polls showed a steady rise in the number of citizens who favored recalling to office the wartime hero Charles de Gaulle. The former leader seemed to stand above parties and partisanship and to possess the qualities the situation demanded. After the failure of his RPF movement in 1951, de Gaulle had remained aloof from politics. He had published his memoirs of the Second World War, forcefully arguing that he had rescued the honor of France in a previous crisis. His criticisms of the parliamentary system appeared increasingly cogent as the Algerian conflict worsened.

Events reached a climax on May 13, 1958. Another parliamentary crisis had led to the announcement of a ministry headed by Pierre Pflimlin, who had indicated he would seek a negotiated settlement with the Algerian rebels. This news set off a revolt among the European colonists in Algeria, who stormed government buildings there. The army supported this uprising, and its leaders called for the naming of an emergency government in France. De Gaulle and his supporters had not organized the Algerian revolt, but they were willing to take advantage of it. In Algiers, Gaullist activists inspired calls for him to take power, while in France, de Gaulle indicated his willingness to assume authority. Several weeks of tense negotiations were required to work out the details. Much of the French left was deeply suspicious of de Gaulle's motives. Was he not an army officer, an intransigent nationalist, and a man impatient with traditional democratic procedures, as his willingness to profit from the Algerian insurrection showed? But the army and supporters of a French Algeria were not entirely enthusiastic about de Gaulle either. He had never openly committed himself to the continued maintenance of French control in North Africa; in private, he had made it clear that he did not think Algeria's Muslim population could really be integrated into the French nation. De Gaulle's willingness to appear before the National Assembly and to accept a grant of special powers to govern the country for six months voted by its members proved just enough to overcome the fears of the deputies that they might be signing away France's liberties. De Gaulle also secretly reassured the U.S. government, which did not want to see a democratic government overthrown, but which had lost all confidence in the Fourth Republic. The agreement, reached on May 29, 1958, came just in time to forestall a plan hatched among the hard-line officers in Algeria to land paratroopers in metropolitan

France and stage a military coup. De Gaulle had succeeded in what one of his closest collaborators later called a “bluff.”⁴ He had obtained power on his own terms, without subordinating himself either to the politicians or the generals. France’s Fourth Republic disintegrated because of its inability to master the challenge of adapting France to a new political world despite some success in modernizing the country’s social and economic structures. Whether the new strong man could do better remained to be seen.

De Gaulle’s Republic

Charles de Gaulle’s return to power in 1958 opened a new chapter in French history. Under his direction, the country’s political institutions were changed and a new regime that continues to this day, the Fifth Republic, established. The political stability resulting from the new constitution gave the country a chance to recognize the significance of the social and economic changes already begun before May 1958 but which became ever more apparent in the years that followed. To demonstrate that his recipe for a new republic could overcome the political paralysis that had brought him to power, however, de Gaulle first had to resolve the painful Algerian dilemma. On June 4, 1958, he flew to Algiers, where a huge crowd of *colons* waited for him to outline his policy. In a masterful exercise in ambiguity, de Gaulle stepped to the microphone and began, “*Je vous ai compris*” (I have understood you). His listeners heard what they wanted to hear: a promise to keep Algeria as an integral part of France. More thoughtful observers noted that the new president had carefully avoided any specific commitment, and he had not adopted the diehards’ slogan, “*Algérie française*” (French Algeria). In an effort to appeal to the Muslim population, de Gaulle swept away previous restrictions and declared all inhabitants full French citizens. For the time being, de Gaulle succeeded in reestablishing authority over the army, which was ordered to reduce repressive measures against civilians and concentrate on defeating the armed units of the Algerian Liberation Army.

The agreement worked out in May 1958 gave de Gaulle six months to design a new constitution, which would be submitted to a referendum for approval. In the meantime, the Assembly would be in recess and he would govern with emergency powers. The new constitutional plan reflected many of the political ideas de Gaulle had outlined in 1946, but it incorporated some significant features of the parliamentary tradition as well. As de Gaulle had long urged, the office of the presidency was converted from a largely ceremonial one into a post endowed with broad powers. The president was to be elected, not by the members of the two assemblies but by an electoral college made up of some 70,000 local and national officials. He could therefore claim that his authority rested on a broader base than that of the deputies. The president was to name the prime minister, and he could appeal directly to the nation on issues he regarded as vital by calling referenda. In times of crisis, the new constitution authorized the president to assume emergency powers.

The concept of entrusting so much power to a single person was largely alien to the French republican tradition. It called up memories of the Second Empire and the Vichy regime, and a number of prominent Fourth Republic political leaders—including the former prime minister Pierre Mendès-France and the future Fifth Republic president François Mitterrand—urged voters to reject de Gaulle’s plan. But the new constitution retained some aspects of France’s long tradition of parliamentary government. A directly elected National Assembly, balanced as usual since the Third Republic by

a Senate chosen by indirect election, remained a key feature of the system. The prime minister, designated by the president, still needed the Assembly's approval to govern. On paper at least, it was by no means obvious whether the real direction of the government would be determined by the president or by the prime minister.

The fact that the Fifth Republic took on a clear-cut presidential character thus owed as much to the personality of de Gaulle as to the provisions of the new constitution. His behavior as head of the Resistance movement during the war and as president of the Provisional Government in 1944 to 1946 had already indicated that de Gaulle would exert strong personal authority. Once the voters had given their overwhelming approval to the new constitution in a referendum in November 1958, he proceeded accordingly. As ministers, he appointed men who had distinguished themselves over the years primarily by loyalty to himself, rather than politicians possessing their own bases of power. He interpreted the constitutional text in a manner that gave him exclusive authority over a broad "reserved domain" of issues, particularly with regard to foreign and military policy. The parliamentary elections that followed the constitutional referendum were a triumph for the new Gaullist party, the Union for the New Republic (UNR), an organization pledged to provide the president a solid bloc of loyalists. De Gaulle waited four years before calling on the voters to give the presidential nature of the new republic its final consecration by approving an amendment to have the president elected directly by popular vote. But by then, the country had become familiar with a new model of authority.

Algeria and Decolonization

The great challenge of de Gaulle's first years in power was to settle the Algerian conflict and, more broadly, to disentangle France from an imperial heritage that had become more of a handicap than an asset. Initially, his plans for Algeria were unclear, even to himself. The French army succeeded in improving the military situation, but at the price of imposing even harsher control on the Muslim population. In October 1958, de Gaulle appealed publicly to the FLN to accept a "peace of the brave" and enter into negotiations, without indicating what final outcome he expected from them. But the provisional government the nationalists had established in Tunisia rejected this overture.

Even before the offer to enter negotiations with the Algerian rebels, de Gaulle's new government had set in motion sweeping changes in the rest of the French empire. As in many other cases, the Fifth Republic consolidated, completed, and took credit for changes that had begun under its predecessor. The leaders of the Fourth Republic had recognized the necessity of giving the native populations of France's colonies a greater voice in running their own affairs, as the creation of the "French Union" in 1946 showed. The colonies were represented in the French parliament and a few of their leaders—such as Léopold Senghor from Senegal and Félix Houphouët-Boigny from Ivory Coast—even rose to ministerial posts. Despite their French education and their active participation in French politics, this new generation of leaders increasingly identified themselves with their native communities and demanded reforms leading, not to greater assimilation with France, but toward autonomy and eventual independence.

French colonial policy, which in the years immediately after the war had concentrated on maintaining authority over the colonies, rapidly shifted in the direction of accepting their autonomy. As we have seen in 1954, military defeat forced the granting of independence to the three Indochinese colonies, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The



Figure 30.1 French Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle during His First Official Visit to Algeria
Brought back to power in 1958 by a revolt of the French army and settlers in Algeria, Charles de Gaulle had to tread carefully in attempting to settle the bloody conflict there. Within a few years, however, de Gaulle realized that the costly war was preventing France from progressing in other areas. French colonists in Algeria and many army officers accused him of betraying the supporters who had helped him replace the Fourth Republic. (Photo by Daniele Darolle/Sygma via Getty images)

two North African protectorates, Morocco and Tunisia, obtained their independence in 1956. In that same year, the colonies minister, Gaston Defferre, pushed through a law creating elected local institutions in all of France's sub-Saharan African colonies and increasing recruitment of civil servants from the local populations. In 1957, the former British colony of Gold Coast, renamed Ghana, became the first sub-Saharan African country to gain full independence. This development made it clear that the days of European colonial rule were drawing to an end.

The process accelerated with the installation of the Fifth Republic. Along with the new constitution, de Gaulle announced a referendum in all the French colonies (Algeria, considered an integral part of France, did not participate) on the formation of a "French Community" whose members would gain internal autonomy while the French government continued to decide military and diplomatic policy for the group as a whole. In recognition of the sovereignty of the colonies' populations, however, de Gaulle promised that any colony that voted not to join the Community would immediately be recognized as independent—although at the price of losing all French aid. One colony, Guinea, took de Gaulle at his word. The others voted to remain associated with France. De Gaulle's hope that the French Community would succeed in keeping the former colonies from claiming full independence was soon disappointed, however. By 1960, all the African

members had opted to become sovereign nations. Rather than abandoning them altogether, as it had done in Guinea, France retained close bilateral relations with its former colonies. French continued to be the language of higher education in most of them, French aid remained important, and the former mother country retained important economic interests. To ensure France's continued influence, Fifth Republic governments also regularly provided military support for friendly governments even when this meant upholding corrupt and dictatorial regimes. Corruption in Africa offered opportunities for unscrupulous French officials and businessmen; critics rephrased the official slogan hailing French-African cooperation—"France-Afrique"—as "Françafrique," meaning "African money for France."

The path toward the independence of Algeria was a much more tortuous one. De Gaulle himself slowly recognized that the only way to bring the bloody conflict there to an end was to concede to the predominantly Muslim population the right to make a free choice on its own future. The majority of the population in metropolitan France was probably prepared to accept such a solution from the time de Gaulle took office. But he faced an arduous task in persuading his own supporters, many of whom had backed him on the assumption that the man who had fought to reclaim every inch of French territory in the Second World War would never yield Algeria. He also had to keep the army in line and try to persuade the *pieds noirs* to accept the inevitable. At the same time, he was determined to achieve a negotiated settlement with the FLN on his own terms or else to find more moderate Algerian leaders who would accept some kind of continuing relationship with France.

By September 1959, de Gaulle was ready to announce publicly that the Algerian population would be allowed to vote to determine its own future. In January 1960, the *pied-noir* population in Algiers rose up to protest de Gaulle's dismissal of General Massu, one of the leaders of the 1958 movement. A number of police officers were killed, and it took a week before the rebellion was put down. A visit to Algeria in December 1960 convinced de Gaulle that the Muslim population would never settle for less than full independence—a view confirmed by a referendum in January 1961.

As it became clear that France was preparing to concede Algerian independence, the die-hard partisans of *Algérie française* became increasingly desperate. On April 22, 1961, four generals opposed to de Gaulle's policy staged a military putsch in Algiers. Rumors of a planned parachute attack on Paris created an atmosphere of tension. While the rebellious generals tried to win over the troops stationed in Algeria, de Gaulle took to the airwaves. His appeal to rank-and-file soldiers to disavow "the little band of retired generals" who led the coup and his call to the people of France for their support—heard via transistors in barracks in Algeria—turned the tide against the rebellion. Even as it faced down this military revolt, however, the Fifth Republic government stepped up its campaign against FLN supporters in France itself. Since 1958, surveillance of the large population of Algerian immigrants in France had been in the hands of Maurice Papon, a former Vichy official and a die-hard opponent of Algerian independence. When Algerians staged a major demonstration on October 17, 1961, Papon unleashed the police. At least 45 unarmed Algerians were killed on that day, the high point of a wave of repression that claimed between 120 and 200 lives in the fall of that year.⁵

Despite the violence in France, negotiations had begun between the French government and representatives of the FLN in the Swiss city of Évian-les-Bains. These culminated, after much hard bargaining, in a settlement announced in March 1962. The French negotiators had tried to obtain guarantees to permit the European

population to remain in Algeria. But the bitterness inspired by eight years of conflict made these arrangements unworkable. The supporters of *Algérie française*, the Secret Army Organization (OAS), waged a campaign of terror against both the Muslim population and French authorities who were attempting to carry out the government's policy. The violence of this *politique du pire* drove most of the European civilian population to flee to metropolitan France, ending the hope that a significant French community would remain in Algeria. In France itself, the OAS plotted to assassinate the man who had "betrayed" their cause. De Gaulle narrowly escaped a bomb attack in September 1961 and an ambush in August 1962 during which his car was riddled with bullets. By then, however, Algerian independence had become an irreversible reality.

The independence agreement in 1962 marked the end not only of French control of Algeria but also of the long era of French overseas imperialism. After more than a hundred years of proclaiming that the universal values associated with the French Revolution imposed on the country a "civilizing mission" in other parts of the world, French leaders and citizens now praised themselves for having accepted the inevitability of decolonization and did their best to forget the empire. Decolonization meant, among other things, a sharp reduction in the number of non-white members of the French parliament, as men like Léopold Senghor became leaders in newly independent African countries. Although the Évian treaty had promised that any residents of Algeria who wanted to keep their French citizenship would be allowed to do so, in practice the French government applied ethnic and religious criteria, allowing European settlers and Jews to cross the Mediterranean but doing its best to keep out Muslims, including the *harkis* who had fought on the French side during the war and faced reprisals in independent Algeria.

The remaining French overseas territories—known officially nowadays as the *départements* and *territoires d'outre-mer* (overseas departments and territories, usually abbreviated as the "DOM-TOM") and sometimes described as the "confetti of empire"—are, with the exception of French Guiana on the northeast coast of South America and research stations in Antarctica, small islands: Guadeloupe and Martinique in the Caribbean, Saint-Pierre and Miquelon in the North Atlantic, Réunion in the Indian Ocean (all of which were part of the "old" French Empire before 1789), New Caledonia, and the islands of French Polynesia in the South Pacific. Their inhabitants have the same rights as other French citizens, including that of voting in national elections. The fact that they receive French social benefits helps explain why there has been little agitation for independence in most of these territories. The DOM-TOM enable France to claim a presence in distant parts of the world, and some of them have practical value. Kourou in French Guiana, for example, is the European Space Agency's rocket-launching center. Nevertheless, the residents of the DOM-TOM are far removed from the mainstream of French life and have not fully participated in the country's prosperity.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Henri Lemaitre, *L'Aventure littéraire du XXe siècle* (Paris: Bordas, 1984), 577.
- 2 Cited in Robert Zaretsky, *Albert Camus: Elements of a Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 115.
- 3 Cited in Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 206.
- 4 Cited in Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 2:230.
- 5 Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 167.

31 Politics and Economy in De Gaulle's Republic

In Charles de Gaulle's mind, the granting of independence to France's former colonies and the liquidation of the Algerian war were essential steps to redefine France's place in the world. This was not because he thought that France needed to resign itself to being one of several medium-sized European countries, but because the sequels of colonialism drained away resources the country needed to modernize. France needed to "marry its century," as he put it, to maintain its standing as a great power. France's citizens largely agreed with de Gaulle on the need for change in France's life, but their vision of modernity was very different from his. For most of them, the end of the Algerian struggle was a relief, and they hoped to be able to enjoy the benefits that the country's increasing economic prosperity promised. By the late 1960s, this divergence between the population and its determined leader would lead to the most spectacular mass protest movement in any western country in many decades, and soon afterward to the end of de Gaulle's presidency.

De Gaulle's Grand Design

As convinced as ever that glory was an indispensable aspect of France, the president of the Fifth Republic pursued an ambitious design to free the rest of the world from domination of the two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union. Militarily, this ambition found expression in the development of a nuclear arsenal. The monopoly on nuclear weapons that the United States had possessed at the end of the Second World War had already been broken by the Soviets, who exploded their first atom bomb in 1949. America's privileged ally, the British, also acquired nuclear weapons, but France was the first medium-sized country to join the nuclear club largely through its own efforts. The development of the French bomb had begun during the Fourth Republic, but the first successful test was not carried out until February 1960. In de Gaulle's eyes, possession of the bomb would guarantee the country's independence from the two superpowers. Although France could hardly afford a military establishment equal to theirs, its nuclear-armed *force de frappe* (strike force) enabled the country to assert its own interests. The remark by one of France's top generals in 1967 that the missiles France was developing to carry its bombs could be pointed in any direction was a reminder to both the United States and the Soviet Union of the country's determination to follow its own course. De Gaulle also made good use of France's success in developing a supersonic jet fighter, the Mirage-III, in his diplomacy. The French sold the plane to a number of countries that did not want to be dependent on American arms and the restrictions that came with them. The Mirage thus served to

export de Gaulle's own attitude of prickly national independence, as well as serving as a symbol of France's technological achievements.¹

In reality, French military planning continued to be directed against the possibility of a Soviet attack on western Europe. But de Gaulle's foreign policy often gave the impression that he regarded the United States as the main threat to French autonomy. His quarrels with the Americans dated back to his disputes with Roosevelt during the Second World War. But the real motivation behind his policy after 1958 was based less on settling old scores than on the reality that the American presence in western Europe was much more intrusive than that of the Soviets. Soon after coming to power, de Gaulle proposed that the United States, Britain, and France be formally recognized as members of a "directorate" to determine Western defense policy. The American government rejected this idea, which would have alienated the other European countries, particularly West Germany. This rebuff convinced de Gaulle that the Americans would never treat France as a full partner.

To counter the weight of the United States, de Gaulle sought closer ties with France's old enemy, Germany. The relationship he developed with West German leader Konrad Adenauer led to the signing of a friendship treaty between the two countries in 1963. It established the Franco-German alliance as the dominant factor in European politics, even though de Gaulle soon came to realize that West Germany, dependent on the United States for support against the Soviet Union, would never really embrace his dream of an independent Europe. On the other hand, de Gaulle claimed that the British were too subservient to the Americans and, in 1963, he vetoed their application to join the European Common Market. De Gaulle's nationalism had made the other western European governments fear for the future of that organization when he came to power in 1958, but the Common Market served his designs for modernization of the French economy too well for him to abandon it. De Gaulle nevertheless made it clear from the outset that he viewed the organization as an agreement among governments, not as a first step toward the creation of a larger European entity. During his years in power, French representatives opposed every initiative that smacked of "supranationality," sometimes paralyzing the workings of the organization to block policies they opposed.

From the point of view of relations with the United States, de Gaulle's most significant action was to withdraw his country from the NATO military alliance set up in 1949 to meet the threat of Soviet aggression. In de Gaulle's view, participation in NATO subordinated French policy to American interests. Western Europe risked either finding itself engaged in a war because of American involvements elsewhere in the world, or else having the Americans abandon vital European interests in exchange for Soviet concessions in other areas. The possession of nuclear weapons convinced him that France no longer needed to remain under the American "umbrella." By 1966, the last French military units were withdrawn from the alliance and American troops left the country. From the French point of view, the move restored the country's control over its own fate. From the American point of view, the French took advantage of the fact that the United States was bound to maintain its military presence in western Europe anyhow. France thus enjoyed protection from the Soviet bloc while remaining free to criticize American policy. Although French troops remained stationed in Germany, and France's commitment to the western alliance was never in doubt (as de Gaulle's outspoken support for U.S. actions during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis showed), diplomatic relations between Paris and Washington took on a sour tone that has often resurfaced.

American appreciation of French foreign policy was not facilitated by de Gaulle's efforts to give substance to the idea of France as main representative of those countries that wanted to remain independent of the two superpowers. His open criticism of American involvement in Vietnam, which he denounced in 1966 as an "unjust war ... a detestable war, since it leads a powerful nation to destroy a small one,"² outraged Washington. So did his evocation of the prospect of a Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals," taking in European Russia but excluding the United States. Equally unappreciated in Washington was de Gaulle's criticism of the privileged role accorded to the dollar in the world financial system, and his proposal to return to the gold standard.

The United States was not the only country to take offense at de Gaulle's exploitation of his position as the world's least inhibited statesman. His call for a "Free Quebec" in 1967 was cheered by Canada's French-speaking minority, but infuriated the Canadian government. The arms embargo he imposed on Israel at the time of its 1967 war against a powerful coalition of Arabic states, and his subsequent remarks about "the Jews ... a people ... sure of themselves and overbearing," caused great controversy inside and outside of France. The line between the effective defense of French national interests and the deliberate provocation of controversies became increasingly thin. In 1968, the brutal Soviet military occupation of Czechoslovakia, whose leaders had attempted to reform the Communist system from within, showed that the countries of Europe had less room to maneuver between the two superpowers than de Gaulle had claimed. At the time of his resignation in 1969, the wisdom of his ambitious foreign policy, even from the point of view of French interests, was in doubt.

Strong Government and Economic Development

The Gaullist concept of politics involved not only establishment of an independent foreign policy, but also creation of a government capable of acting decisively in domestic affairs. For years, de Gaulle had denounced the paralysis of the parliamentary system, and the damage caused by conflicts among the multiplicity of political parties and groups that dominated it. The new constitution approved in 1958 incorporated many of his ideas, and elections for the new parliament at the end of that year gave the president an overwhelming majority. Many prominent politicians who had opposed his ascent—particularly the spokesmen of the democratic left, such as Mendès-France and Mitterrand—lost their seats. The Communists were reduced to ten deputies. The Gaullist movement had a broad electoral base. It inherited most of France's conservative voters, apart from a small group still loyal to Pétain and irreconcilably opposed to de Gaulle. But de Gaulle also attracted many centrists and a significant number of voters whose normal loyalty was to the left, but who accepted his argument that France needed a more effective government.

The end of the Algerian war freed de Gaulle to turn his attention to other issues. The OAS assassination plots convinced him that the constitution established in 1958 needed an important modification. To ensure that the practice of a strong presidential government would continue even if he disappeared, he called a referendum in 1962 to approve the election of the president through direct universal suffrage. The referendum campaign was a clear-cut contest between the Fifth Republic's strongman and the political forces identified with the Fourth Republic. From the Communists to the moderate centrists, all the non-Gaullist formations joined in a "*Cartel du Non*" that called on voters to reject de Gaulle's proposal. The 62 percent vote to

approve the change showed that the president's hold on public opinion had diminished somewhat with the end of the Algerian crisis—in 1958, 80 percent of voters had approved the new constitution—but it was still a solid endorsement of the new political order. Opponents could continue to protest against the excessive weight of the government in public affairs and against the systematic placement of Gaullist loyalists in key positions, but the future was clearly with those who decided to work within the new system.

The solid popularity of the Fifth Republic during most of the 1960s was due both to its success in ending the Algerian crisis and to its ability to provide conditions favoring economic prosperity. The Gaullist regime inherited from its much maligned predecessor a functioning system of economic planning, and it maintained the crucial decision to participate in the Common Market rather than keep French business sheltered behind tariff walls. The economic consequence of the Algerian war, however, had been accelerating inflation, threatening the economic progress made in the 1950s. De Gaulle's government made the fight against inflation a major priority. Stiff budget cuts and the introduction in 1959 of the new "heavy" franc, worth a hundred "old" francs, marked a psychological break with the past and helped clear the way for resumption of rapid growth.

Even more decisively than the planners of the Fourth Republic, economic experts of the Fifth stressed the necessity to favor the most productive enterprises in order to prepare France for the competition it would face when the free-trade area foreseen by Common Market treaties went into full operation at the end of the 1960s. The results were especially dramatic in agriculture. A series of laws enacted between 1960 and 1962 reversed the long-standing policy of protecting small farmers against market forces. Migration out of rural areas, already significant since the end of the war, accelerated sharply. But the remaining farmers were far more efficient, though rarely satisfied with government policy. French agriculture, which had been unable to meet the country's food needs in the postwar decade, began to suffer from chronic overproduction, stimulated by generous government aid. By 1981, the country had become the world's second leading exporter of food products.

The modernization of agriculture paralleled the growth of manufacturing. Between 1959 and 1970, France emerged from the middle of the pack of leading industrial countries to achieve a growth rate second only to Japan. In this period, total production increased at an average annual rate of 5.8 percent. Governmental agencies continued to intervene actively to push private enterprises to modernize. They promoted mergers that would produce firms large enough to stand up to foreign competitors, and guided efforts in areas considered especially important in maintaining economic independence, such as the development of computers. A similar push for productivity led to changes in patterns of commerce. The government ceased to protect small shopkeepers against the competition of bigger stores, and the first *hypermarchés* opened in 1963. The regime put heavy emphasis on modernizing France's infrastructure, especially in areas where the country had lagged behind other industrial powers. The 1960s saw a great burst of highway construction, for example, as modern four-lane highways replaced the scenic but excruciatingly slow *routes nationales*. The road-building industry grew by an average of 16 percent a year during the decade. This rapid economic expansion was not without its costs. Critics at the time deplored the depopulation of the country's villages and small towns and the

ravaging of its landscape. The “unprecedented consumption of fossil energy, of space and resources ... exacted a cost in terms of pollution and more or less recognized evils, not only from the generations at the time, but from those that have followed,” two French environmental historians have recently written.³

De Gaulle saw success in technological competition as a way in which France could compensate for the loss of the empire on which its world standing had long depended. “Being the French people, we must reach the rank of a great industrial state or resign ourselves to decline,” he announced.⁴ Gaullist policy emphasized the development of distinctively “French” technologies, such as the gas-graphite design for nuclear-power plants that was put forward as an alternative to the light-water model developed in the United States. This policy made the regime attractive to engineers and technical workers, who strongly identified with the notion that their efforts were serving the nation. On the other hand, considerations of national prestige sometimes overrode calculations of profitability, as in the 1963 decision to invest heavily in development of the supersonic Concorde airliner—a technological success but a financial flop. The final balance sheet for the regime’s economic policies in the 1960s showed that a decade of rapid and sustained growth had enabled France to close much of the gap between its standard of living and that of its European neighbors.

On the European scale, however, French firms continued to be smaller, on the average, than their competitors, and less oriented toward the world market. The old habits fostered by decades of protectionism were difficult to root out. By the mid-1960s, some critics were beginning to ask whether the regime’s heavily state-driven economic policies could keep the country competitive with the economic giant across the Atlantic. A controversial best-seller published in 1967, Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber’s *Le Défi américain* (“The American Challenge”), argued that the only way of warding off American domination was to adopt more of the American spirit of innovation, as he himself had done in creating *L’Express*, a newsweekly that borrowed ideas from American publications like *Time* magazine. Servan-Schreiber also argued that France needed to seek closer cooperation with its European partners, rather than trying to stand up to the Americans by itself.

Politics in the Gaullist Republic

The restlessness that was coming to the surface in some sectors of French society began to find expression in 1965, when de Gaulle sought re-election in the first presidential campaign held under the system of direct voting established in 1962. Having brought the divisive Algerian war to an end and led the country into a new era of economic prosperity, de Gaulle thought that he was solidly entrenched in the presidential office he had created for himself. The power exercised by the president in the Fifth Republic appeared so overwhelming that many critics questioned whether de Gaulle’s system offered any possibility of a democratic alternation of power. In 1964, François Mitterrand—himself a future Fifth Republic president—denounced the system as a “perpetual coup d’état.” With the conclusion of the Algerian crisis in 1962, de Gaulle had marked the inauguration of a new period in domestic politics by replacing his first prime minister, Michel Debré, with Georges Pompidou. The choice revealed much about de Gaulle’s conception of politics. Pompidou, a professor of literature who had become a banker, had never held any elective office. He had served as de Gaulle’s chief assistant during the first months of the Fifth Republic, before

returning to the business world. His nomination as prime minister showed de Gaulle's determination to have a government headed by his own man and to reduce the influence of the Assembly. Pompidou was to remain in office for six years, an all-time record for French prime ministers and an indication of the difference between the institutional instability of France's parliamentary regimes and the steadiness of the new presidential republic.

De Gaulle anticipated an easy victory in the November 1965 election and hardly even deigned to campaign before the first round of voting. Two major candidates emerged to challenge him, however, and both showed that there were unexpected weaknesses in the president's base of support. The various left-of-center groups, long divided by hostility between Socialists and Communists—and by the quarrels remaining from the period when the SFIO had supported the Algerian war while many non-Communist leftists had opposed it—produced a surprise by uniting behind François Mitterrand. Mitterrand (whose political career had begun during the Second World War, and who had served in several cabinets during the Fourth Republic) had the advantage of not belonging to any of the major leftwing parties. An outspoken critic of the Gaullist system, he had opposed the new constitution in 1958, but he was now willing to try his chances within it. Influenced by his contacts with members of the Democratic Feminist Movement, founded in 1961, one of the first feminist groups to appear since the granting of women's suffrage in 1944 had satisfied the principal demand of the movement in the first half of the century, Mitterrand made a conscious effort to appeal to women voters. His program promised the legalization of birth control, banned in France since 1920, equalization of salaries and educational opportunities, and greater participation for women in politics. He was joined in the race against de Gaulle by a young politician named Jean Lecanuet, who put himself forward as a centrist and advocate of greater European unity as well as friendlier relations with the United States. Both positions were at odds with de Gaulle's aggressively nationalist foreign policy.

While de Gaulle maintained a dignified silence in the presidential palace, Mitterrand and especially Lecanuet adopted an aggressive, "American" campaign style. Lecanuet made particularly effective use of television, which for the first time dominated the election. For the population, accustomed to broadcasting that was tightly controlled by Gaullist loyalists, the opposition candidates' barrage of attacks on the president came as a shock and, in many cases, as a breath of fresh air. The election results themselves were even more of a surprise. De Gaulle received only 43 percent of the first-ballot vote, and Mitterrand's total of 32 percent showed that the united forces of the left could constitute a credible alternative to the regime. Under the new election system, a runoff was necessary, since no candidate had received an absolute majority. Determined to retain his office, de Gaulle roused himself and demonstrated that he still had no master in the art of broadcast propaganda. He was re-elected in the second round by 55 percent to 45 percent for Mitterrand. But the election had demonstrated that he no longer commanded automatic support, and that the Fifth Republic's institutions did not foreclose the possibility of an opposition candidate coming to power.

The political evolution that had begun in 1965 continued in the years afterward, as parties and leaders tried to position themselves for the post-de Gaulle future. The loyal Pompidou irritated de Gaulle by suggesting that he saw himself as a future president. Among conservatives, a split emerged between those who continued to

believe in the need for a strongly centralized government with extensive economic powers and a faction that favored a more liberal economic policy and greater openness to international cooperation. The leader of this current was Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a young and ambitious specialist in economic policy. On the left, Mitterrand had clearly established himself as the major figure. He continued his efforts to unite the quarreling non-Communist parties, but remained handicapped by the deep-seated hostility against former leaders of the SFIO stemming from the Algerian war. The national legislative elections of 1967 showed the effects of these developments. The Gaullist bloc emerged with only a bare majority, provided by the voters in France's small overseas territories. A gradual transition toward a more open political system and toward the era of post-Gaullism seemed well under way.

Notes

- 1 On the role of the Mirage, see François Leroy, "The Elusive Pursuit of *Grandeur* and Independence: Mirage Diplomacy, French Foreign Policy and International Affairs, 1958–1970" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 1997).
- 2 Cited in Alfred Grosser, *Affaires extérieures: La politique de la France 1944/1984* (Paris: Flammarion, 1984), 214.
- 3 Christophe Bonneuil and Stéphane Frioux, "Les 'Trente Ravageuses'?" in Céline Pessis, Sezin Topçu, Christophe Bonneuil, dirs., *Une Autre Histoire des "Trente Glorieuses"* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), 55.
- 4 Cited in Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 93.

32 Society and Culture during the “Thirty Glorious Years”

Preoccupied with political conflicts at home and colonial wars abroad, both French politicians and much of the population were slow to recognize how profoundly their society and culture were changing in the decades after the war. In retrospect, the period from 1945 to the early 1970s is remembered, in the phrase coined by French economist Jean Fourastié, as “the thirty glorious years” of rising prosperity and improving standards of living. Until the early 1960s, however, the difficulties of daily life, such as the shortage of affordable housing and the fear of inflation, were more obvious to the population than the effects of growth. In the first years after 1945, France continued in many respects to be as it had been before the war—a country marked by a sense of life’s harshness and injustices. In one fundamental way, however, the French population had already changed its attitude toward the future. Starting even before the end of the war, the French birth rate—which had remained at a level too low to sustain population growth since before 1900—began to show a marked rise. The increase accelerated after the Liberation, despite the economic difficulties of the period. The country, which for decades had been characterized by a disproportionately elderly population, now experienced a sudden demand for baby clothes and kindergarten places. Foreign visitors who remembered prewar Paris where cafés stayed crowded and noisy until the wee hours of the morning lamented that the French were now too inclined to stay home with their children.

The postwar baby boom was accompanied by significant changes in family relations. Heterosexual marriage remained an almost unquestioned norm, but the popularization in France of Sigmund Freud’s ideas about sexuality and the “Kinsey report” on American sexual behavior contributed to a recognition that women as well as men had sexual urges. The sale of contraceptives for women remained banned, but information about the “rhythm method” gave couples some assurance of avoiding unwanted pregnancies. Laurence Pernoud’s *J'attends un enfant* (“I’m expecting a baby”), first published in 1956 and still in print, gave prospective parents up-to-date advice and helped spread the method for “painless delivery” introduced a few years earlier by doctor Fernand Lamaze, based on exercises first developed by Russian obstetricians. Reflecting new ideas about child psychology, parents were encouraged to be less rigid and authoritarian with their children, and to pay more attention to their individual personalities.

The population boom was encouraged in part by government policies, many of them extensions of measures first enacted in the 1930s or under Vichy. At the time of Liberation, Charles de Gaulle had proclaimed that France needed “12 million beautiful babies” to ensure the country’s future. Postwar governments extended the program of family allocations launched in 1939, which was meant to lessen the financial burden of child rearing and

guarantee periods of maternal leave. Policies on family matters and sexuality remained conservative. Although Vichy's law imposing the death penalty for abortion providers was repealed, the sale of contraceptives remained illegal, and Vichy's legislation against homosexuals, a break with prewar France's relatively tolerant policies, was maintained. But fundamentally the population increase reflected a general if inarticulate faith that a better future was in prospect for French society. In pursuit of that better life, the French were increasingly willing to change jobs and addresses. Occupational and geographic mobility reached record levels during the 1950s.

The growth of the population was one of the stimuli fueling France's postwar economic expansion. It created a larger market for all kinds of products, and assured manufacturers that the number of consumers would continue to grow in the future. But France's move toward becoming a consumer society was a slow one during the 1950s. In 1954, only 8 percent of French households had a refrigerator or a washing machine. In 1951, despite the introduction of low-cost auto models meant for a popular market, French streets still needed to accommodate only one car for every 17 people. The telephone, long an institution in American domestic life, remained a rarity. The fact that only a minority could afford the equipment that increasingly defined the "good life" made it difficult for most of the population to believe statistics purporting to show living standards were on the rise. The prevailing atmosphere was one of frustration more than contentment.

Once the first phase of postwar economic construction, with its emphasis on infrastructure and heavy industry, had been completed, French government planners turned to deliberate efforts to encourage increased consumption. Only if French households came to buy more would French manufacturers and retailers be able to grow and prosper. Much of this effort was aimed at women, who were assumed to make most decisions about what goods their households would buy. Glossy women's magazines, such as *Elle* and *Marie-Claire*, encouraged French women to aspire to homes equipped with modern kitchen appliances and indoor plumbing, which they could see exhibited at the annual *Salon des arts ménagers*, a trade fair that attracted large crowds. Although these goods were marketed with promises that they would make women's lives easier, the emphasis on women's role in the home reinforced traditional assumptions about gender roles. French men, it was assumed, were more interested in automobiles. At auto shows, crowds gawked at the large vehicles presented by American manufacturers, but French producers knew that their customers could not afford such extravagances. They did, however, buy small domestic models, like the Citroën 2CV, the "canard" (duck), easily recognizable because of its canvas roof. To make these purchases possible, consumers were encouraged to buy on credit, a break with traditional French emphases on thrift and savings. By the end of the 1950s, France was definitely becoming a society shaped by mass consumption. Members of all social classes were now able to purchase consumer goods that had previously been luxuries restricted to the bourgeoisie.

France's entry into the age of mass consumption did not occur without controversy. Many critics denounced the new emphasis on consumer goods as a sign of "Americanization," the replacement of a traditional French way of life by a foreign set of values. The influential French Communist Party, whose campaign against United States foreign policies peaked in the early 1950s, denounced a supposed plot to turn France into a captive market for mass-produced American products. Intellectuals like Sartre and de Beauvoir lamented the conformity of American life and the hectic pace imposed by the

unending quest for efficiency, in contrast to the supposedly slower and more humane tempo of French society. In the early 1950s, American participants in the Fulbright educational exchange program set up to encourage closer contacts between the two countries were given talking points to answer common French criticisms of the United States. Both the French and American governments worked to encourage American tourism in France, as a way of making the country less dependent on foreign aid and of building ties between the two societies. Nevertheless, French hotelkeepers resisted the notion that their facilities were not good enough for these visitors, and French cartoonists lampooned boorish Americans who lacked the sophistication to appreciate the country's museums and monuments. Museums and monuments were a major concern of the activist government created after Charles de Gaulle's return to power in 1958. Among the Fifth Republic's innovations was the establishment, in 1959, of a Ministry of Culture, headed by the novelist André Malraux, a one-time leftist who had become an ardent Gaullist. Malraux launched a major campaign to encourage the French population's appreciation of high culture, renovating old museums, opening new ones, and undertaking to clean away the grime that had accumulated on monuments such as Notre Dame cathedral over the centuries.

A few hundred yards from Notre Dame, a new monument "to the martyrs of the deportation," inaugurated in 1962, helped shape the historical memory of the Second World War. From the moment of the Liberation, both the government and the public had cooperated in popularizing the myth of "la France toute résistante," the idea that, except for a handful of traitors, the entire population had refused to cooperate with the German occupiers. The ruins of the "martyred village" of Oradour, the small southwestern town whose inhabitants had been massacred in July 1944, were preserved as a memorial whose message was that the French had been innocent victims of foreign invaders, a claim that was put into question in 1953 when the trial of soldiers who had carried out the killings revealed that many of them were men from the French region of Alsace who had been drafted into the German Army. Over a thousand heroic members of the Resistance (but only six women) were honored as "Companions of the Liberation," but once the postwar purges and trials were completed, little was said about wartime collaboration. By the early 1950s, almost all those convicted for their actions under Vichy had been amnestied, and many had returned to important positions in public life. The claim that the whole French population had suffered together worked against recognition of the fate of the French Jewish population, who were lumped together with other victims in the category of "deportees." This classification obscured the fact that most of the Resistance activists and forced laborers deported during the war had in fact survived, whereas almost all of the 75,000 Jews sent to the camps had perished.

The Renewal of the Church

The birth of the Fifth Republic coincided with an important transformation in the Catholic Church, one of the institutions most identified with resistance to change. For some time, French Catholics had been moving away from the hostility to the modern world that had long characterized the church. During the war, many Catholics had supported the Resistance and committed themselves to democratic politics. The war years had also seen the renewal of a controversial experiment, the movement of "worker-priests," ordained clergy who took factory jobs and sought to bring religion

to a milieu that had long been cut off from it. Although the number of worker-priests was small, their effort to model a new relationship between the church and society attracted worldwide attention, and conservative Pope Pius XII's directive suppressing the movement in 1954 aroused widespread opposition, even from loyal Catholics like the novelist and newspaper columnist François Mauriac. The 1950s were also a high point in the influence of Catholic lay movements, particularly the *Jeunesse agricole catholique* (Young Catholic Farmers), which attracted a generation eager to combine modern farming methods with the preservation of a rural culture threatened by aggressive capitalism. The Catholic student movement attracted many bright young people, although the church's conservatism often led them to switch to more leftist groups as they grew up.

Pius XII's successor, John XXIII, pope from 1958 to 1963, set a new direction for the Catholic Church throughout the world. French bishops played leading roles in the Second Vatican Council that convened in 1961 and redefined the nature of church dogma and practices. For many French Catholics, John XXIII's *aggiornamento*, or updating of the church, was a liberation. French replaced Latin as the language of church services, and rituals were transformed to make them more participatory. An ecumenical spirit replaced the church's condemnation of Protestantism and Judaism, and the church firmly embraced human rights and democracy. Until John XXIII's successor Paul VI officially condemned all artificial birth control methods in 1968, there was widespread expectation that the church might accommodate itself to changing sexual practices by accepting artificial forms of contraception, and that it might soften its condemnation of homosexuality. The changes enacted at the Council set off widespread ferment within the French church, sometimes going beyond what its leaders had intended. Some priests and nuns renounced their vows altogether, while others, supported by tradition-minded laity, resisted the reforms. One French bishop, Monseigneur Marcel Lefebvre, became a leader of conservative resistance to the Council reforms and was eventually excommunicated for his activities. The growing diversity within the church meant that it had become a mirror of the larger society around it.

A Social Transformation

The political stability and economic prosperity of the decade following de Gaulle's assumption of power set the stage for profound transformations in French society. The new society was characterized by a dramatic increase in living standards, a steady shift to new forms of work, an increase in leisure time, and a change in patterns of personal and family life. Georges Perec's 1965 novella *Les Choses* ("Things"), a story of a young couple obsessed with acquiring the ever-more-plentiful consumer goods they saw around them, depicted the period's atmosphere with painful intensity. The de Gaulle years were the time when the majority of French families were finally able to try to satisfy this yearning. Average personal income, adjusted for inflation, grew by 50 percent between 1959 and 1970. Families used this money to furnish their homes with consumer goods that had still been out of reach of most households before 1958: washing machines, refrigerators, televisions, and private automobiles. By 1970, more than half of all French households owned each of these items. The homes in which they were installed were considerably more comfortable than the housing available a decade earlier. The period saw considerable progress in overcoming the

housing shortage that had persisted since the 1920s. Much of the new housing was in large apartment complexes on the fringes of France's major cities, particularly Paris. Harshly criticized by urban planners for their dreariness and the lack of such social amenities as parks and gathering places, these complexes were nevertheless initially regarded by many of their inhabitants as an improvement over the crowded and rundown quarters they replaced.

Not all the newly available resources went into the “things” of Perec’s title. A significant fraction went to meeting the needs of the country’s growing population of young people. The sharp increase in the birth rate after the war generated a demand for more teachers and more schools. The shift to a more technologically oriented economy encouraged the new generation to stay in school longer and demand more specialized instruction, so secondary education had to expand even faster than primary schooling. The age for compulsory education was raised from 14 to 16 in 1959. More and more students continued on from the *lycées* to the university level. The percentage of 19-year-olds enrolled in educational institutions more than doubled between 1954 and 1968. By the mid-1960s, France’s institutions of higher education, many of them still housed in nineteenth-century facilities, were full to the bursting point. The prosperity of the 1960s also encouraged the government to increase old-age pensions significantly. Planners assumed that the population and the economy would continue to grow at the rapid rates that had prevailed since the 1940s, and projected that this growth would more than cover these benefits.

Intellectual Trends

The new generation of students turned to a new generation of thinkers as their intellectual guides. Although many figures from the war years continued to write (notably Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir), the death of novelist and essayist Albert Camus in a 1960 auto accident symbolized the passing of a generation shaped by the struggle against Fascism and the encounter with Communism. The new “structuralist” thinkers whose writings became popular in the 1960s reacted against their predecessors’ stress on individual commitment and responsibility. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss used his analysis of primitive societies to suggest that all human interactions were governed by certain fundamental patterns or structures. His works implied that the notion of human freedom, so central to the thinking of Camus and Sartre, was essentially an illusion. The literary critic Roland Barthes took aim at the notion of the author as creative personality and the text as a reflection of social reality. He stressed instead the autonomy of writing and the presence of underlying patterns of meaning—inherent in the structure of language—that imposed themselves on writers of any period. In literature, the writers of the *nouveau roman* (new novel) school—such as Alain Robbe-Grillet and Natalie Sarraute—produced texts without identifiable characters or definable plots, and tried to eliminate any hint of an authorial presence.

New intellectual currents challenged leftist doctrines as well. The dissident Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser turned his back on Sartre’s laborious effort to reconcile human freedom and Marxist analysis, and elaborated a “structural” Marxism. He argued that human beings were unable to transcend their place in the class hierarchy and the historical process derived from it. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu drew attention to the unacknowledged mechanisms by which social systems inculcate in individuals the behaviors or “habitus” that perpetuate themselves. Challenging the

traditional progressive assertion that public education facilitates social mobility, he contended that successful students were “inheritors” who would monopolize the privileged positions of the families they came from. Frantz Fanon, originally from the West Indies, drew inspiration from the Algerian revolt to justify a worldwide revolt of people of color against the oppressive capitalist and imperialist civilization of the West. French students, like those in other western countries, were also attracted by calls for revolution emanating from Fidel Castro’s Cuba and Mao Zhe-Dong’s China. By questioning the notion of human autonomy central to the entire liberal tradition, and the Marxism that had grown out of it, all the influential French thinkers of the period contributed to a sense that western civilization was in the midst of a fundamental crisis. They attracted young followers flattered by the idea that they were destined to participate in the making of a new era.

Youth

Kept in school longer than their parents, the new generation that came of age in the 1960s was the first to have the leisure time and pocket money to develop a distinct “youth culture.” Youthful audiences accounted for much of the success of a new generation of young filmmakers. Billed as the “New Wave,” it was led by François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, whose first major works reached the screen in 1959. Reacting against the elaborately costumed historical dramas and imitations of Hollywood formulas that had dominated French cinema since the war, the “New Wave” directors brought a fresh spirit to their art that influenced directors all over the world. New forms of music and entertainment reached an even broader audience than the movies. The media took notice of the phenomenon when a magazine devoted to music and other youthful enthusiasms, *Salut les copains! (Hello, Gang!)*, reached a circulation of over a million a year after its 1962 debut. The immense response to a public rock-and-roll concert sponsored by the magazine in June 1963 in one of Paris’s public squares symbolized the triumph of the “yé-yé” generation. Audiences of all ages became increasingly addicted to television, which saturated the country during the 1960s. The number of sets in use went from 2.5 million in 1961 to 11 million in 1970. Programs became more diversified, with a second public channel being created in 1964; color broadcasting started in 1967. The introduction of commercial advertising in 1968 indicated a move away from the concept of broadcasting as a public service. In the meantime, the government’s heavy-handed control over such a powerful medium became increasingly controversial.

With the threat of military service in Algeria no longer hanging over the heads of its male members, the generation of the 1960s struck its elders as apolitical and preoccupied with private pleasures. One of the clearest differences between the youth of the 1960s and their predecessors was in sexual attitudes and behavior. Film stars like Brigitte Bardot had already expressed a new openness about sexuality in the 1950s but, in the 1960s, practice began to catch up with theory. The introduction of the birth control pill in the middle of the decade coincided with a sharp and unexpected drop in the rates of both marriages and births. Sexual activity was increasingly separated from the formation of families. Although laws against homosexuality remained on the books, they were less stringently enforced. The weekly dances at the Paris “homophile” club *Arcadie*, established in 1954 by André Baudry, made it a major meeting place for men seeking same-sex relationships, although Baudry, the group’s authoritarian leader,

insisted that members adhere to conventional standards of dress and behavior, rather than openly challenging social norms.

Overt eroticism was part of the appeal of *Club Méditerranée*, a chain of vacation colonies that enjoyed great success in the 1960s. Customers flocked to the club's resorts, which offered an escape from the still-powerful conventions of French social life. In exotic and sunny locales, such as Morocco and Tahiti, club members were encouraged to "say goodbye to the weight of convention, leave everything and become someone else for two weeks ..." by shedding their clothes for swimsuits and sarongs and addressing each other with the informal "tu" rather than the formal "vous."¹ Few customers worried about the fact that their vacations were made affordable through the exploitation of low-wage local labor—an example of the persistence of unequal relations between France and its former colonies, even after the end of imperialism. The success of *Club Méditerranée* was part of a growing emphasis on leisure in French life. A 1956 law extended annual paid vacations for French workers from two to three weeks, and by the mid-1960s, many employers were granting workers four weeks of time off every summer, a standard written into the law in 1969.

The Changing Structure of French Society

Despite the rapid growth of the French economy and the increase in leisure time, finding a job remained a major preoccupation for the younger generation born after the war. The nature of available employment possibilities was changing rapidly. The percentage of the population employed in agriculture plunged, particularly as a result of the Fifth Republic's push for the modernization of the farming sector. Young women especially were reluctant to remain in the country's rural villages, which were the last areas to benefit from the changes in domestic life that characterized the period. The fraction of the workforce employed in industry grew slowly, reaching its all-time peak of 39 percent in 1968. But the most rapidly growing sector was "services," an amorphous category including all the varieties of white-collar jobs, which represented over 50 percent of the employment market by 1970. The best placed were those who emerged at the top of the highly competitive educational system—graduates of the prestigious "*grandes écoles*" such as the *École nationale d'administration*, which had been created after the Liberation to train up-to-date managers for French business and government positions. These well-educated *cadres* were often pacesetters in the spread of new lifestyles, such as overseas vacation travel. Most of those emerging from school had to settle for more modest positions, however, generally in large, bureaucratically structured enterprises. The number of small, independent, family-run enterprises (both farms and shops) was in decline. The French middle-classes' pre-occupations changed accordingly, from a desire to maintain individual economic autonomy to a greater concern about opportunities for promotion on the job and for greater freedom in private life.

The industrial working class remained an important part of French society during the postwar period. Average living standards rose for them, as for most of the population, but at a slower rate. While many workers acquired some of the accoutrements of a middle-class lifestyle—by 1975, 74 percent owned their own car—their children still had a disproportionately small chance to obtain university degrees or rise in social status. Technological change was beginning to alter the nature of work, creating a sharp distinction between unskilled positions and those demanding greater education. Less-skilled positions were increasingly filled by members of France's

growing immigrant population. The rapid growth of the economy, starting in the early 1950s, led the government and employers to encourage this influx. In contrast to the Poles, Belgians, and Italians who had come to France in the 1920s, most of these new immigrants came from overseas. Young men from North Africa took up low-paying jobs doing manual labor, while a government agency recruited women from the Antilles to work in hospitals and civil-service jobs. With overall rates of unemployment remaining very low during these years of prosperity, there were few expressions of concern about these new arrivals.

The changing nature of the working class had its repercussions on the organized labor movement. The Communist-dominated CGT and the more moderate FO and FEN faced a dynamic new rival, the *Confédération française démocratique du travail* (CFDT). This confederation had grown out of the Catholic union movement. In 1964, it dropped the reference to Catholicism from its name and began a new life as a reform-minded alternative to the CGT, with a special appeal to younger workers. While the CGT remained loyal to the Communist philosophy that a real change in workers' conditions could only come when representatives of the proletariat seized political power, the CFDT took an interest in ideas such as "*autogestion*," the notion of workers managing factories on their own. Its growing influence was a sign of dissatisfaction, both with the capitalist industrial society of the time and with the rigidity of the Communist movement. The CFDT was close in spirit to the small political groupings of the "Second Left" that had grown out of the movement against the Algerian war—such as the Unified Socialist Party (PSU), which criticized the ideological rigidity of the Communists and the SFIO.

In the early 1950s, the American anthropologist Lawrence Wylie spent a year living in a small French town. His book, *Village in the Vaucluse*, portrayed a closed community in which social life centered around face-to-face encounters with neighbors in small cafés and at leisurely games of *boules* (French bowling) in the town's squares. Residents voted regularly in elections, but primarily to express their frustrations with a government from which they expected little in the way of improvements to their lives. Having lived through two massive wars in 40 years, the older villagers remained pessimistic about the future. By the mid-1960s, when Wylie revisited the village, the lives of its residents, along with those of all of France's population, had changed considerably. Their standard of living had risen, and they were now connected to the outside world through television and better roads that made travel easier. Their children were more educated and increasingly likely to pursue careers that took them to other parts of the country. Grim forebodings about another world war no longer dominated their thoughts about the future. At the same time, however, France's public life remained dominated by a figure—Charles de Gaulle—who had been born in 1890 and whose concerns seemed increasingly remote from those of ordinary French men and women. The question of how France's public institutions could be reconciled with new social and cultural realities was becoming increasingly acute.

Note

1 Cited in Ellen Furlough, "The Business of Pleasure: Creating Club Méditerranée, 1950–1970," in K. Steven Vincent and Alison Klairmont-Lingo, eds., *The Human Tradition in Modern France* (Wilmington, NC: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 186.

33 May 1968 and the End of the Gaullist Era

The Events of May 1968

Modern France has experienced many crises, but few as sudden and as unexpected as the “events” that erupted in May 1968. In a world filled with turmoil—massive campus protests against the Vietnam War in the United States, the “Cultural Revolution” launched by the Chinese Communist leader Mao Zhe-Dong, the “Prague Spring” in Czechoslovakia—France seemed to be an island of stability. The prominent Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse, whose critical writings about capitalist society inspired student protests around the world, visited Paris early in the month and met with campus militants, but he was not impressed. He told a journalist that the “angry students” in Paris were not ideologically mature enough to launch a serious movement.¹ President de Gaulle—who was about to embark on a visit to the dissident Communist nation of Romania, part of his unceasing effort to create a balance to the influence of the two superpowers—was equally unconcerned about such a possibility. In a few short weeks, however, two long-neglected currents of unrest came together to set off an explosion: the frustrations of a generation of students unsure of their future, and the discontent of workers in France’s offices and factories.

The first signs of the 1968 protest movement surfaced in the overcrowded universities of the Paris region, especially at the new campus in suburban Nanterre, a hastily constructed facility where students were packed together in isolation from the nearby capital. Small groups of activists, inspired by various currents of leftwing thought, succeeded in mobilizing wider student support for protests against degrading conditions on campus. At the heart of the campus protest movement was a charismatic red-haired student agitator, Daniel Cohn-Bendit. A fellow student remembered him years later as “a red flame … radiant, thoughtful, iconoclastic and exhilarated.”² When university authorities suspended “Danny the Red,” his supporters spread the alarm to students at the main Paris campus, the Sorbonne in the heart of the Left Bank. Starting in the first week of May 1968, demonstrations in the neighborhood around the Sorbonne grew steadily larger, leading to violent confrontations with the police. Reenacting scenes from Paris’s nineteenth-century insurrections, the participants uprooted trees and the iron grills surrounding them to build barricades blocking the streets. They greeted the police with barrages of paving stones and Molotov cocktails; the forces of order retaliated with tear gas and billy clubs. Appalled by the level of police violence, the residents of the neighborhood sided with the students, giving them shelter in their apartments, and sometimes adding to the chaos by pelting the police with flowerpots and garbage from their windows.

The authorities were slow to react. De Gaulle proceeded with his Romanian trip, leaving matters to the prime minister, Georges Pompidou, who thought that the movement would soon blow over. Instead, the insurrectionary spirit spread from campuses to factories and offices. Inspired by the students' occupation of the Sorbonne and other university campuses around the country, factory workers and civil servants took over their workplaces. By the middle of May, normal life in France had ground to a halt. In the occupied buildings and factories, a freewheeling atmosphere of debate prevailed. The dominant theme was the need for a complete restructuring of modern society, to break down hierarchical structures and provide greater opportunities for participation. Students challenged the authority of professors, workers demanded freedom from foremen and bosses, and state employees wanted a greater voice in directing policy. The walls of Paris were covered with inventive posters created by the students of the Fine Arts faculty, and with slogans that reflected the sense that anything was possible: "Be realistic, demand the impossible," "It is forbidden to forbid." The state-owned television system was paralyzed by a strike, as programers and reporters demanded greater autonomy from political interference.

Returning from his trip abroad, de Gaulle tried to reassert his authority with a television broadcast promising a referendum on social reforms, but his effort was a failure. His prime minister, Georges Pompidou, attempted to end the nationwide strike wave through negotiations with union leaders, but they were unable to persuade



Figure 33.1 Striking Citroen Factory Workers Marching in Paris in May 1968

The student strikes in May 1968 inspired French factory and office workers to demand higher wages and more say about their conditions. The massive wave of strikes and factory occupations was the largest social movement in the country's history. (Photo by Charles CICCIONE/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images)

the rank and file to accept wage increases and return to work. Although the organized forces of the left had had little to do with the spread of the movement, some of their leaders sensed the possibility of a power vacuum and prepared to fill it. On May 28, François Mitterrand announced that he was ready to step in as president, with Pierre Mendès-France as his prime minister. This initiative received little support from the movement that had most often proclaimed its support for revolution, the French Communist Party. Sensing that the spontaneous strike wave was threatening their control over the working class, Communist politicians and union leaders tacitly allied themselves with the government in trying to restrain the movement or divert it toward traditional forms of action such as strikes for higher wages.

On May 30, France was stunned to learn that President de Gaulle had disappeared, leaving the capital for an unknown destination. A day later, he was back. At the time, it was not known that he had flown to headquarters of French forces stationed in Germany and consulted army commanders about the attitude of their troops in case armed intervention was required to end the movement. But before resorting to force, de Gaulle took to the radio to make another appeal to the population and to announce national legislative elections. This time, he obtained a massive show of support from the sectors of the population that had remained silent in the previous weeks, but that had now reached the limit of their patience. Within hours of his radio broadcast, a giant crowd formed on Paris's Champs-Elysées, shouting support for a return to order.

De Gaulle's maneuver broke the protest movement's momentum. In the days that followed, workers gradually evacuated the occupied factories and students, many of them suddenly remembering year-end exams, drifted back to their classrooms. Prime minister Pompidou orchestrated the election campaign, in which a conservative backlash propelled the Gaullist party to a record majority. The annual vacation season, beginning just after the elections, drained the last air from the insurrectionary balloon. The "events" of May 1968 thus ended without causing any tangible changes; the movement never turned into a true revolutionary crisis. But the exaltation of those heady weeks of excitement remained in participants' minds. As one woman who lived through the "events" later wrote, they constituted "my true internal liberation, which was accompanied by a freedom from fear."³ Even those who had been most aghast at the disorder had to admit that the extent of the movement showed the depth of dissatisfaction in the midst of France's prosperous and increasingly modernized society.

Among those most affected by the events of May was de Gaulle himself. The demonstrators forced him to recognize the shortcomings of the authoritarian government structure he had created. The crisis also demonstrated the limits of de Gaulle's efforts to maintain French independence: To shore up the weakened French franc, he had to accept financial aid from the United States. Adamant about restoring the authority of the government, he nevertheless recognized in the movement a curious echo of his own preoccupations with breaking down old authority structures and blockages in French society and introducing what he called a greater sense of participation in public life. This put him at odds with conservatives who dominated his own party and who now had a majority in the Assembly. Along with the prime minister, their role in orchestrating the June 1968 elections had been greater than de Gaulle's. The separation between the leader and many of his own followers became evident when he dismissed Pompidou, and replaced him with a ministry charged with

implementing broad social reforms that many conservative deputies opposed. Frustrated by this opposition, de Gaulle resorted once again to a direct appeal to the nation, calling a referendum in April 1969. But he chose to campaign on a complex reform of the constitution that seemed to have little to do with the broad theme of participation. He may have been deliberately preparing his exit from a situation he could no longer control. In any event, the voters for the first time rejected a Gaullist referendum proposition. On the following day, Charles de Gaulle issued a terse two-sentence letter of resignation and withdrew from public life. The sequels of the May “events” had brought to an end the extraordinary career of France’s most important twentieth-century leader. He retreated to his country home, where he died in November 1970.

The Pompidou Presidency

The effects of May 1968 were both profound and hard to define. The movement did not result in any sweeping change in French laws or public institutions. Over time, however, it was reflected in the reshaping of traditional patterns of authority. This changed atmosphere affected not only politics but also other institutions, ranging from schools to the family. In the long run, the May 1968 demonstrators’ call to “*changer la vie*” (“change life”) proved prophetic.

More than any other French regime since Napoleon’s, Charles de Gaulle’s Fifth Republic reflected the personality of its creator. When he stepped down in 1969, the question of whether the system could be made to work by anyone else was still largely unresolved. Over the next 12 years, France cautiously edged out of de Gaulle’s shadow. His first successor, Georges Pompidou, showed that a loyal follower could maintain the system. The second post-Gaullist president, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, proved that the office could be occupied by a non-Gaullist governing in coalition with conservative forces that had backed his predecessors. Until 1981, however, the Fifth Republic had not yet withstood the ultimate test of a democratic constitutional system: an electoral triumph by the political opposition that had been out of power since the regime was founded.

De Gaulle’s resignation in midterm in April 1969 forced the calling of an unscheduled election for the presidency. The leftwing parties failed to agree on a common candidate, while the Gaullists turned to the man who had been de Gaulle’s prime minister from 1962 to 1968, Georges Pompidou. Pompidou’s relations with de Gaulle had soured in the last year of de Gaulle’s reign, but he was still the obvious choice for most of those who had supported the general. Pompidou lacked his predecessor’s ability to attract a significant portion of the centrist and leftwing electorate, however, and the Gaullist party under his leadership became a strictly conservative grouping.

In most respects, Pompidou continued the political policies of his predecessor. The biggest exception was in the field of foreign policy. Without abandoning de Gaulle’s insistence on French autonomy, Pompidou sought to reduce frictions with France’s partners. In particular, he lifted the French veto on British entry into the Common Market. The European Economic Community thus grew from six to nine members (Ireland and Denmark accompanying the British) in 1972. Pompidou’s first prime minister, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, wanted to address the frustrations that had led to May 1968. His program promised a “New Society,” but the conservatism of the Gaullist

party blocked any major reforms. His successor, Pierre Messmer, was known primarily for his strict law-and-order measures. In domestic policy, Pompidou tilted more strongly toward satisfying the demands of big business. The argument that France needed large, profitable companies to survive the rigors of competition in the enlarged Common Market continued to justify government policies in their favor. The Pompidou years were also identified with the lifting of many long-standing restrictions on construction of modern buildings in Paris's older neighborhoods. To advocates, the shiny new structures represented a determination to keep Paris and France abreast of the modern world. To critics, they were a mutilation of the city's historic character. The most aggressively modernist of these structures, a contemporary art museum with walls made of glass and exposed metal ducts in bright colors—set at the edge of the seventeenth-century Marais neighborhood—now bears Pompidou's name.

Like de Gaulle's second term, Pompidou's presidency ended prematurely when he died in office in April 1974. Pompidou's illness had given other politicians ample time to prepare for an election. On the left, the disarray of 1969 was replaced by a new atmosphere of unity. The change was due to the startling renovation of the non-Communist left, due to the creation of a new, broad-based Socialist party in 1971 and to changes in the policies of the Communists. In 1969, the candidate put up by the SFIO had won barely 5 percent of the presidential vote, and the party had appeared moribund. The Communists, with their solid 20 percent of the vote, dominated the left. Their preponderance deterred middle-class and centrist voters from voting for the non-Communist parties of the left for fear that—if they won—they would be dependent on Communist support. The non-Communist left's leading figure, François Mitterrand, was among those who concluded that the chances of ousting the conservatives from power depended on the creation of a new kind of leftist party, capable of holding its own against the Communists.

Although he had never been a member of the old SFIO, Mitterrand played a key role in the congress at Epinay in 1971, at which a new Socialist party (PS) was created out of the ruins of the older formation. The new party repudiated the old generation of SFIO leaders, identified with Cold War anti-Communism and compromised by their support for the army during the Algerian war. Freed from this unhappy heritage, the PS absorbed several smaller groups from the "Second Left." At the same time, the French Communists had found new leadership and were striving to escape from the political ghetto in which they had been confined since 1947. Their longtime leader Maurice Thorez, a dedicated Stalinist, had died in 1964. His successor, Waldeck-Rochet, had tried to open up the party somewhat, but he died in 1969 before being able to institutionalize major changes. In 1970, the party chose a younger leader, Georges Marchais, who at first seemed dedicated to continuing internal party reforms. Under his leadership, the Communists and the newly strengthened Socialists reached agreement on a joint electoral program in 1972. In its details, this "Common Program" harked back to the Popular Front of 1936 and the Liberation coalition of 1945. It promised the nationalization of major industries and incorporated anticapitalist rhetoric dating from before the years of postwar economic expansion. It reflected very little of the atmosphere of May 1968. But it had a dramatic effect on the political climate. In the 1974 presidential campaign, the joining together of the Communists, with their solid electoral base, and of the newly confident Socialists, able to reach out to voters whom the Communists could not attract, made the possibility of a left-oriented government realistic for the first time since the creation of the Fifth Republic.

On the right, the most important development was the success of a non-Gaullist personality against the self-proclaimed defender of the de Gaulle-Pompidou tradition. The Gaullist claimant was Jacques Chaban-Delmas, who had served as prime minister under both de Gaulle and Pompidou. His rival was Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, an economic liberal who had been de Gaulle's finance minister from 1962 to 1966, but who had separated himself from many of de Gaulle's policies and who had campaigned against de Gaulle's referendum in 1969. In the atmosphere of economic difficulties that had developed during the early 1970s, Giscard d'Estaing's critique of the Gaullist tradition and his promise that a dose of economic liberalism would restore prosperity made him more attractive to conservative voters than his rival. He also benefited from the restlessness of a younger generation of Gaullists, impatient at the domination of "barons" like Chaban-Delmas, who owed their positions to their loyalty to the leader during the Second World War or the 1950s. The first round of the 1974 presidential election served as a primary for the rightwing candidates, and "VGE" scored a clear victory over his rival.

Giscard D'Estaing's "Advanced Liberal Society"

The runoff round of the 1974 election was the closest and most bitterly contested in the history of the Fifth Republic. It was also the first in which the nature of the regime's institutions was no longer an issue. Both sides accepted the presidential interpretation of the constitution, but they differed drastically in their vision of how French society should be structured. The results showed a country divided in half. Giscard d'Estaing, the rightwing candidate, won, but only by a handful of votes. The new president's reaction to this situation was to present himself as a reformer, eager to reach out to groups that might have felt excluded by the preceding Gaullist governments. He opened his term with a number of symbolic gestures meant to mark a break with the past, and to reduce the distance between the presidency and the people. He walked up the Champs-Elysées to the presidential residence on foot after his inauguration, rather than riding in the traditional limousine. He had the national anthem, the *Marseillaise*, played in a slower and less martial rhythm, and he adopted the practice of making well-publicized visits to the homes of ordinary families.

In the first years of his presidency, Giscard d'Estaing pushed through a number of significant reforms aimed at giving substance to his call for an "advanced liberal society." Eighteen-year-olds received the right to vote, and the government-controlled radio and television monopoly—long accused of being a propaganda tool for the party in power—was split into several independent (but still government-owned) parts. In response to complaints about the elitism of the French educational system raised at the time of the May 1968 events, a 1975 law ended the long-standing practice of separating students destined for higher education from others prior to the level of the *lycée* (the French equivalent of American high school). All students were now supposed to follow the same curriculum in the French equivalent of middle school. A new check on the powers of the government was also introduced by a law allowing 60 deputies in either the Assembly or the Senate to appeal any law to the Constitutional Council. Another significant political reform was the decision to give Paris, the capital city, the right to elect its own mayor, ending a tradition of central government control dating back to the Napoleonic era.

The Giscard d'Estaing presidency also began with important reforms affecting women. Already, by the mid-1960s, many French women were no longer content to accept that

the granting of the right to vote in 1944 had completed the process of giving them equal rights. They were no longer willing to tolerate a division of gender roles that made women primarily responsible for taking care of the home and raising children. Some significant changes in the laws affecting women and the family had already been passed even before May 1968. In 1965, women finally obtained the legal right to work outside the home without their husband's permission, and in 1967, the 1920 law prohibiting the sale of contraceptives was repealed. Women's issues had become increasingly prominent after 1968 with the emergence of a new feminist movement, many of whose members were young women who had participated in the 1968 student movement but who had discovered that "we do the cooking while they talk about revolution."⁴ The right to abortion became a central theme of public debate in 1971 with the publication of a declaration signed by 343 women, ranging from well-known celebrities like Simone de Beauvoir to young militants, admitting they had had illegal abortions and calling for the right for women to decide for themselves whether to terminate their pregnancies. A 1972 law abrogated the article of the Napoleonic Code that had prohibited women from bringing paternity suits. Recognizing the growing number of couples who were living together without being married, the new law reduced the legal differences between legitimate and illegitimate children.

After the 1974 election, Giscard d'Estaing appointed the first woman to hold a full-fledged ministerial office in the Fifth Republic, Minister of Health Simone Veil, and created a Secretariat on Women's Status designed to make recommendations on issues affecting women. Veil, a career politician with no links to the women's movement, nevertheless played a major role in pushing through several important laws affecting women. Three laws passed in 1974 and 1975 broadened access to contraceptives, liberalized divorce, and legalized abortion. The abortion law was the most controversial of the three. For the health minister Simone Veil, it was a matter of women's rights and social justice. She was well aware that wealthy women could travel abroad to obtain abortions, while poorer women suffered "the harm resulting from illegal procedures."⁵ The 1975 law, highly controversial in a Catholic country, marked a significant extension of individual autonomy and a new definition of women's rights. The "feminism" of the Giscard government should not be exaggerated, however. Françoise Giroud, a prominent journalist appointed to head the new women's Secretariat, found her advice ignored and quit in 1976. Despite the Veil laws, women's rights activists came to see the leftwing parties as the only realistic vehicles for obtaining a real political voice.

Foreign Affairs

In foreign affairs, Giscard continued the effort, begun under Pompidou, to integrate French policies more closely with those of its European partners. He helped institute regular annual meetings of leaders of the European Community's member governments. He also pushed for establishment of the European Monetary System, under which the values of currencies of the major member states (with the exception of Britain) were linked together, an arrangement that looked forward to the eventual introduction of a common currency. Stable exchange rates promoted trade among the partners and pushed them to coordinate their economic policies. With France's consent, direct elections for a European Parliament were held for the first time in 1979. Although the parliament's powers were strictly limited, this was a major step beyond the "Europe of Nations" that de Gaulle had favored.

Willing to go beyond the bounds of Gaullism in Europe, Giscard d'Estaing continued the Gaullist tradition of having France pose as champion of closer relations between Europe and the developing countries of the Third World. He led his European partners to sign the Lomé agreements of 1975, aimed at favoring trade between the European Community and former European colonies in Africa and the Caribbean. France became particularly active in selling weapons to Third World countries—a policy that benefited French industry but often aligned it with regimes with unsavory reputations. To maintain France's influence in Africa, Giscard frequently dispatched troops to support “friendly” governments, with little concern for their democratic credentials. Accusations that he had accepted a gift of valuable diamonds from Jean-Bedel Bokassa, the corrupt dictator of the Central African Republic, hurt Giscard's reputation. Under Giscard, France also seemed ready to accept the permanence of the hard-line Communist regime in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. French public opinion chafed at the government's passive reaction to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, and its president's refusal to support the anti-Communist Polish Solidarity protest movement that developed after 1980.

France and the Changing Economic Climate

Criticized at home for some of his foreign policy initiatives, Giscard lost even more of his popularity in the course of the 1970s because of his inability to master the country's continuing economic difficulties. In 1976, when the president replaced his first prime minister, the Gaullist and future president Jacques Chirac, with Raymond Barre (a nonparty figure known for his economic expertise), he acknowledged that economic issues had become the country's top priority.

The long period of sustained prosperity that France enjoyed from the late 1940s to the early 1970s coincided with a worldwide trend. The subsequent downturn was also associated with changes in the larger world economy. By the end of the 1960s, the United States, the pivot of that economy during the postwar decades, had begun to experience slowed growth and rising inflation—a combination that was to become characteristic of the new period. In 1971, Washington ended the fixed parity between gold and the dollar, whose value, stable since 1944, was suddenly allowed to float. This introduced a serious element of instability into world trade. The 1973 Middle East war between Israel and the Arab countries of Egypt and Syria led the Middle Eastern oil-producing nations to strike at western industrial countries by drastically increasing the price of oil, unleashing new inflationary pressures. France, with no oil reserves of its own, was hard hit by this “oil shock.” One response was a heavy investment in nuclear power plants. By 1990, France had become the country most dependent on this controversial technology, drawing nearly 75 percent of its electricity from nuclear energy.

By the mid-1970s, the French began to realize that their economic difficulties stemmed not only from external events over which they had little control but from domestic causes as well. The industrial plant built up in the 1950s and 1960s was beginning to show its age. In the face of stagnating markets and competition from more efficient producers in other countries, many French companies were no longer profitable. Such major industries as coal mining, steel, and automobile production suffered, and the French failed to gain a leading place in key high-technology areas

(such as computers) to offset their decline. French economic planners remained wedded to a model that emphasized the importance of large factories and enterprises geared toward mass production at a time when smaller, more flexible companies were becoming the keys to growth and innovation. Giscard had promised that his government would move in the direction of economic liberalism. He deemphasized the government-directed planning that had been a main feature of French life since the liberation. He also down-pedaled the Gaullist program of promoting investment in all major branches of industry, in favor of concentrating on a few areas where the country could be most competitive.

These policies failed to overcome the economic slowdown that had begun in 1973. Unemployment, marginal during the prosperous years of the 1960s, began a steady march upward—from 400,000 in 1974 to 1,600,000 in 1981. Unlike the strikes of May 1968, the labor struggles of the 1970s were desperate efforts to stave off the closing of factories like the Lip watch plant in Besançon, site of a highly publicized but ultimately unsuccessful worker takeover in 1973. Despite the Giscard government's promise to reduce government intervention in the economy, the economic crisis produced pressures for more regulation. A 1975 law required employers to get government permission before laying off workers, and political considerations led to increasingly costly efforts to prop up large enterprises in order to keep them in business. In many cases, however, these subsidies only succeeded in postponing bankruptcies that eventually became unavoidable. The impact of the prolonged economic crisis fell especially heavily on regions that had long been centers of heavy industry. These included the Lorraine steel-making basin and the coal-mining region of the Nord, where the closing of factories and the loss of jobs threatened the social fabric built up over many decades. In previous periods, a slowdown in industrial production and a rise in unemployment had usually been accompanied by stable or falling market prices, but the peculiarity of the “stagflation” that set in during the 1970s was that inflation remained high. Despite the Barre government's program of rigorous budget austerity, prices rose by more than 10 percent a year from 1978 to 1980. Matters were not helped by the second “oil shock” of 1979, when petroleum prices quadrupled after a revolution overthrew the government of the shah of Iran.

The Intellectual Climate of the “*Après-mai*”

Since the Second World War, the tone of French intellectual life had been largely set by the left. One of the many paradoxical results of May 1968 was to undermine this hegemony. By 1981, when a left-oriented government finally took power, the divorce between that movement and the country's intellectual elite was almost complete. The rapid collapse of the 1968 movement caused a certain disillusionment with leftist ideas and a strong reaction against the Communist party, the embodiment of Marxist orthodoxy, which had opposed the student movement and limited the impact of the subsequent strike wave. The publication of the Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn's devastating account of the Stalinist prison camp system, *The Gulag Archipelago*, in the mid-1970s strongly affected French intellectuals. Many of them now converted to the view that totalitarian tendencies were inherent in any version of socialist ideology or revolutionary politics, and some proclaimed their opposition to the united leftwing coalition forged by François Mitterrand because of the Communist Party's role in it.

A student generation concerned about its economic future turned away from the small ultra-leftist groups that survived after 1968 and, in some cases, embraced aggressively rightwing tendencies.

The new intellectual climate of the 1970s also saw a radical shift in the way in which the Second World War was remembered in France. The filmmaker Marcel Ophuls's documentary about the Vichy years, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, which was made for television in the late 1960s but banned by nervous government officials, was finally released as a movie in 1971. Through candid interviews with former collaborators as well as Resistance members, it undermined the myth of a French society united in opposition to Vichy and the Germans.

The discrediting of the Marxist tradition went hand in hand with the rise of what has come to be known as "postmodernism" in philosophy and literary theory. Postmodernist thought proclaims its tolerance for diversity and contradiction; it is therefore hardly surprising that the label has been applied to a variety of thinkers whose ideas cannot always be harmonized. The movement has been an international one, but many of its key figures have come from France. The philosopher and historian Michel Foucault was one of the most prominent. His specialty was the unmasking of the relations of domination and oppression concealed in the structures of everyday life and language. After May 1968, Foucault turned away from traditional leftist politics, with its emphasis on the role of the working class, and threw himself into a movement for prison reform. Later, he became a spokesman for France's movement for the rights of homosexuals. The effect of Foucault's activism was to call into question the traditional values of both right and left (the direction in which Foucault's own personal sympathies lay). The name of Jacques Derrida, philosopher and literary critic, became synonymous with the trend in literary analysis known as deconstructionism. It denied the possibility of finding a single core meaning in any literary text, and questioned the manner in which certain works had been consecrated as "classics" while others were banished from the canon of literary studies. Deconstructionism, like Foucault's writings, had ambiguous implications and, indeed, glorified ambiguity. To its critics, it seemed to rule out the possibility of meaningful political commitment. Derrida and many other deconstructionists were also characterized by a complex and difficult writing style, full of neologisms—which indicated a turning away from any effort to reach the general public.

Foucault, the psychologist Jacques Lacan, and Derrida had a profound impact on women seeking to find ways to *penser autrement* (think otherwise) and escape from the tyranny of "masculinist" modes of expression. Feminist philosophers like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous made France a center for new thinking about women's issues. The growth of France's nascent *Mouvement pour la libération des femmes* further contributed to the splintering of the French left. When the women's movement mobilized to demand tougher punishment for violent rapists in response to several scandalous cases in the late 1970s, for example, some dogmatic male leftists accused them of allying themselves with conservative forces opposed to the liberation of sexuality. Homosexual activists also cited poststructuralist arguments in support of their demands for "the right to be different." Militants such as Guy Hocquenghem fiercely attacked representatives of the older *Arcadie* "homophile" movement, accusing them of colluding in a system that drove homosexuals to limit themselves to a closeted life in which their sexual identities were carefully concealed.

The second half of the 1970s saw the sudden rise to prominence of a group of young writers, most of them former members of leftist groups, who broke radically with their former political values and came to be known as the “nouveaux philosophes” (new philosophers). Savvy at using the media—a 1977 television broadcast devoted to them helped to publicize their ideas—Bernard-Henri Lévy, André Glucksmann, and Alain Finkielkraut denounced anything having to do with socialism and other collectivist philosophies and called for a principled defense of human rights, even against governments in former European colonies. The revelation of the horrors of the genocide committed by the leftist Khmer Rouge regime in France’s former colony of Cambodia in the late 1970s added force to the growing backlash against totalitarianism.

The difficulties surrounding successive efforts to reform the French educational system, whose shortcomings had been so vividly demonstrated in May 1968, added to the general sense of intellectual disorientation in the 1970s. Ambitious efforts to democratize higher education, launched by minister Edgar Faure during the last months of de Gaulle’s presidency, sought to modernize the curriculum and give students and younger faculty more of a voice in decision-making. But the results were mixed. In the years that followed, successive governments tried one formula after another, but the long-range effect was often to alienate all groups concerned: faculty, students, and parents.

As the end of Giscard d’Estaing’s presidential term neared, the “advanced liberal society” he had promised in 1974 seemed to have defaulted on its promises. The reforming thrust of his first year in office had long since exhausted itself. A sputtering economy and a foreign policy that seemed to lack guiding principles undermined the president’s popularity, and he seemed at a loss as to how to respond to the changed intellectual climate. But it was by no means clear that discontent was strong enough to cost the conservative coalition the presidency. The leftwing opposition was itself mired in difficulties. There had been a period of euphoria on the left after the near-miss in the 1974 elections. The Socialist party continued to gain support, and Georges Marchais’s Communists appeared willing to go farther than ever in breaking with the Stalinist heritage that had made many French voters unwilling to let them participate in governing. The high point of this flirtation with a reformist “Euro-Communism” came in 1976, when Marchais announced that his party no longer saw the need for a “dictatorship of the proletariat” to overthrow capitalism, and announced its commitment to a “socialism in the colors of France.” Within a year, however, the Communist leadership decided that the danger of being overshadowed by their coalition partners was greater than the danger of keeping the right in power, and the 1972 left alliance fell apart. The split cost the former coalition partners the chance to win the 1978 legislative elections, and appeared to ruin their chances in the 1981 presidential election.

Notes

- 1 Herbert Marcuse, interview in *Le Monde*, 11 May 1968.
- 2 *Mon Mai à moi: 68, mémoires de femmes* (Ambérieu-en-Bugey: Association pour l’autobiographie, 2002), 21.
- 3 *Mon Mai à moi*, 56.
- 4 Cited in Hervé Hamon and Patrick Rotman, *Génération* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), 2:223.
- 5 Simone Veil, *Une vie* (Paris: Stock, 2009), 162.

34 The Mitterrand Years

The Elections of 1981

The election of the Fifth Republic's first leftwing president in 1981 set the stage for a decade of striking and often unexpected political developments. In view of the defeat of the leftwing coalition in the legislative elections of 1978, the fact that Mitterrand won in 1981 was a surprise in itself. The apparent disarray of his opponents undoubtedly gave Giscard d'Estaing a false sense of security as the election approached. His inability to end the economic crisis and a sense of lack of direction—the reforming energy of the first years of his term had long since faded—cost him critical votes. So did the rivalry between his supporters and the Gaullist backers of his former prime minister, Jacques Chirac.

For his part, the Socialist party candidate François Mitterrand benefited from his party's split with the Communists. The tradition of "republican discipline" ensured that their voters ended up in his column in the second round of the election anyway, while he was able to attract centrist votes by showing the Socialist party's independence from its former allies. Campaigning on a slogan of "calm strength," he struck voters as more convincing than his rival, worn down by seven years in office. The electorate gave Mitterrand a narrow but clear victory, by a vote of 52 percent to 48 percent. For the first time in the history of the Fifth Republic, the country's most powerful office was given to a member of the leftwing opposition that had long denounced such a dangerous concentration of power in the hands of one person.

For the half of the country that had voted for the left, the significance of Mitterrand's election went beyond everyday politics. Happy crowds in the streets revived memories of 1936 and 1968, and showed the depth of expectations raised by the Socialists' promise they would bring about far-reaching social transformation. Business circles and conservative groups were correspondingly alarmed. Prices on the Paris stock exchange fell so sharply after the election that it had to be closed for two days to prevent a panic. But conditions in 1981 were quite different from what they had been in 1936. There was no large-scale popular movement like the wave of strikes that had forced the Blum government into hasty action, and rightwing opposition to the Socialists remained within institutional channels.

Mitterrand immediately showed his willingness to make use of broad powers of the Fifth Republic presidency (whose creation he had opposed in 1958) to consolidate his victory. "These institutions weren't designed with me in mind," he told an interviewer, "but they serve my purposes very well."¹ He dissolved the Assembly and called new elections. With many discouraged rightwing voters staying home, the Socialists and

their small centrist coalition partners won an absolute majority of parliamentary seats. Installed in office for seven years himself, and with a solid legislative majority assured for the next five, Mitterrand was in a position completely different from that of the leftwing governments of 1936 or 1945.

For the first few months of his term, the new president profited from what he called “a state of grace.” Public opinion welcomed the first complete change in political personnel since the creation of the Fifth Republic in 1958. New faces, many of them relatively young, were installed in all key offices. The inclusion of four Communist ministers in the cabinet led by Pierre Mauroy caused concern in other western capitals, particularly in Washington, D.C. (where the conservative Republican president Ronald Reagan had just taken office). But Mitterrand judged that it was better to have their party’s support than its opposition, and he soon convinced the wary Americans he would make no concessions to the Soviet Union. In fact, in foreign policy, Mitterrand proved to be closer to the Americans than his conservative predecessors. During the final flare-up of Cold War tensions that marked the first half of the 1980s, he strongly supported the American decision to match a Soviet buildup of medium-range nuclear missiles with installation of similar forces in NATO countries. In general, Franco-American relations were smoother under his presidency than at any other time during the Fifth Republic.

However, foreign affairs were secondary in the French Socialists’ minds to domestic changes. The festival atmosphere that followed the presidential elections was reminiscent of 1968, but the program the party put forward was closer in spirit to the ideas of 1936 and 1945. It included the nationalization of a wide range of businesses and industries, and a redistribution of income in favor of the lowest-paid groups. This was accomplished through a large increase in the minimum wage and a generous social-welfare program. Mitterrand’s supporters argued that these measures would enable the government to overcome the economic crisis that had dogged France since the mid-1970s by putting more spending money in consumers’ hands and by channeling investment more efficiently. They optimistically promised to revive even the most depressed of France’s heavy industries, and to make quick inroads against unemployment. The Socialists’ program also included reforms in many other areas: an increased voice for workers about factory conditions, the abolition of the death penalty, the delegation of important responsibilities to elected regional councils, and the reduction of the powers of the prefects. Even the title of prefect was abolished for several years. Giscard’s ineffective Secretariat on Women’s Status was turned into a full-fledged Ministry for Women’s Rights, and women were named to several other cabinet posts.

The new government also devoted considerable energy to cultural issues, although it found itself out of step with an intellectual community whose long-standing enthusiasm for leftwing ideas had diminished considerably during the 1970s. The budget for the Ministry of Culture, first created by de Gaulle in 1959, was doubled, and its charismatic minister, Jack Lang, broadened its programs beyond the traditional support for museums, orchestras, and theater to include pop music and public festivals. One of the most successful of his initiatives was the establishment of the *Fête de la musique* (“Festival of Music”), an annual event that draws crowds into the streets of French cities every June for a night of free performances by ensembles of all sorts. Lang’s enthusiasm for Third World cultures made Paris the center for the development of an increasingly intercultural “world music,” mixing European, African, and American

elements. Breaking with a long tradition of state-controlled broadcasting, the new government legalized independent radio stations in 1982, allowing an unprecedented diversity of voices on the airwaves; France's first privately owned television channel was established in 1984. Few of the Mitterrand government's cultural initiatives were as successful as the bold decision to modernize the Louvre museum by building an underground entrance forum topped by a starkly geometric glass pyramid in the central courtyard of one of the world's most famous historic buildings. After tremendous initial controversy, the project has generally been acknowledged to have resulted in a happy marriage of the old and the new.

The “U-turn” of 1983

In the face of a worldwide economic recession that was just reaching its lowest point in 1981, the Socialists' ambitious economic program soon ran into difficulties. France's main economic partners were all taking an opposing course, applying the neoliberal principles of what was known as the “Washington consensus,” which dictated reducing government regulation of the economy and cutting expenditures. The effect of French policy was to unleash rapid inflation without producing any upsurge in production or employment. By June 1982, Mitterrand and Mauroy had to start changing direction. They imposed a freeze on wages and prices, promised not to raise taxes any further, and cut the public budget. This first round of measures proved insufficient and, in March 1983, the Socialist government reached a turning point. France either had to try to buffer itself from the wider world economy by leaving the European Monetary System set up in 1979—and potentially breaking up the European Economic Community—or it had to adopt a full-scale program of economic austerity.

Mitterrand's decision to choose the second path had far-reaching consequences, both for the French economy and for the political atmosphere. The decision to make a “U-turn” away from his government's original policies and to concentrate on making France fully competitive within the framework of a capitalist world economy was a rejection of hopes that had sustained French socialism—in both its democratic and its Communist versions—throughout the twentieth century. The government's new course won some praise from business circles, where it was recognized that the Socialists were facing up to difficult decisions that the conservative governments of Pompidou and Giscard had avoided. The Socialists, for example, finally controlled the inflation that had characterized the French economy for decades, and they abandoned the effort to save failing industrial enterprises. But the new direction deeply disappointed trade unionists and others who had voted in 1981 for a rupture with capitalism. The replacement in 1984 of Mitterrand's original choice for prime minister, the veteran Socialist Pierre Mauroy, with Laurent Fabius (a young graduate of the elitist *École nationale d'administration*), and the Communist party's withdrawal from the governing coalition, underlined the shift from a government identified with the world of labor to a more technocratic orientation.

The market-oriented policies adopted as a result of Mitterrand's “U-turn” were bound to result in a large number of layoffs as uncompetitive factories closed and failing companies went bankrupt. The Socialist government cushioned these blows by extending France's welfare programs. Unemployment benefits were increased, and the retirement age was lowered to 60, and even to 55 in regions with the highest levels of

joblessness. These policies, sometimes called “social anesthesia,” forestalled serious social unrest. Feminist critics, however, charged that the government’s new policies were especially costly to women, who found themselves being urged to accept part-time jobs to make the economy more flexible instead of benefiting from earlier promises to equalize men’s and women’s salaries.

Having concluded that a rupture with the capitalist world economy was not a realistic possibility, Mitterrand made the promotion of a closer union between France and its European partners the highest priority of his remaining years in office. He took a key part in resolving a long-drawn-out dispute over the terms of Britain’s participation in the European Community in 1984, which cleared the way for passage in 1985 of the Single European Act. It committed the members of the organization to the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of goods, money, and people within western Europe. The new arrangements, put into effect at the end of 1992, made it exceedingly difficult for any European country, including France, to adopt an independent economic policy.

While Mitterrand’s government successfully committed France to a more thorough integration with its European partners, another of his announced priorities—the decentralization of the French political system—was less successful. The 22 regions created in 1982 had no authority to coordinate the activities of the smaller departments and of France’s 37,000 municipal governments, and they added another level of complexity to the French political system. (In 2016, the number of regions was reduced from 22 to 13.) The creation of the regions added a new complication to one of the peculiar features of the French political system: the frequency of national elections. In addition to choosing their president and national legislators, French voters are periodically called on to choose members of their regional councils, their departmental councils, and their municipal governments, as well as deputies to the European Parliament. Deputies to the Senate are chosen by electoral colleges made up of local officials. Elections for local offices held in between national presidential and legislative elections tend to produce protest votes against the party in power at the national level. Although presidents and prime ministers are not required to step down if their parties are defeated in these lower-level elections, unfavorable results put them in an awkward situation and often force changes in policy.

The Socialist government’s change of course in 1983 set in motion major changes in the country’s political equilibrium. The Communist party, a major feature of the political landscape since the 1930s, was unable to adapt to the new climate. The Communists withdrew from the governing coalition in 1984, in protest against the policy of economic rigor adopted the year before. But this return to opposition did not revive their electoral fortunes. The drastic decline of industries whose workers formed its electoral base, and the end of any prospect for creation of a non-capitalist economy in France, virtually eliminated the party as a political force. Communist candidates have polled less than 10 percent of the vote in all nationwide elections after 1988.

At first, the Communists’ decline benefited the Socialists. Their share of the vote topped 30 percent in national elections from 1981 to 1988, making the PS the largest single party in France. Despite their success, however, the Socialists were also faced with a dilemma. Having rejected their traditional anticapitalism, they lost their distinctive message, and the difference between their policies and those of traditional rightwing parties became increasingly blurred. The relatively open atmosphere that had characterized the party during its rise to power gave way to an emphasis on supporting

the government, even at the price of suppressing internal debate. It also led to a scramble among party leaders to promote their own careers; Socialist “elephants” began to acquire the same unsavory reputations as the Gaullist “barons” of a generation earlier.

At the same time, the political landscape was altered by the rise of a new party on the extreme right, the *Front National* (FN), which first gained attention by scoring striking successes in local elections in 1983. In the beginning, Mitterrand and the Socialists were not unhappy about the FN’s appearance. They expected it to take votes from the traditional conservative parties, which would be embarrassed by the question of whether they would accept support from a group that used racist and anti-semitic appeals. Before long, however, it became clear that the FN was also winning votes from former working-class supporters of the Communists. The FN steadily increased its score in national votes from 11 percent in the 1984 elections to the European Parliament to just under 15 percent in the 1992 regional balloting. Its gains were made by exploiting widespread concern about the number of non-European immigrants in France and the rise of crime and insecurity in many urban areas. Under its charismatic leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, a former supporter of the Poujadist movement of the 1950s and of French rule in Algeria, the FN became the longest-lasting rightwing extremist movement in modern French history and a model for similar movements in other European countries.

The traditional rightwing parties also benefited from public disenchantment with the Socialists, and particularly with discontent aroused by a school reform proposal put forward in 1984 that was intended to bring Catholic schools under increased government control. To the astonishment of most observers, the proposal revived the long-dormant quarrel over the role of the Catholic school system. A series of rallies against the government’s plan drew large crowds, and forced the withdrawal of the measure. In a society where less than 15 percent of the population still attended church regularly, the issue was no longer one of religion versus republicanism. The mobilization against the government’s plan reflected, above all, a discontent with bureaucratized institutions and a demand for pluralism.

A Multiethnic France

During the early years of the Mitterrand presidency, the situation of the rapidly growing part of the French population whose ethnic origins were not European became an increasing concern. Immigrants were nothing new in France, which absorbed large numbers of Italians, Belgians, Spaniards, and Poles early in the twentieth century, and a substantial influx of Portuguese in the 1960s and 1970s. These groups shared a certain cultural background with most of the French population, and they accepted the principle of assimilation, which offered them entry into national life in exchange for adopting the French language and social customs. The large-scale influx of non-European immigrants began during the economic expansion of the 1950s and 1960s, when French governments encouraged the importation of workers, particularly from Algeria and the former colonies, to meet the booming demand for labor. Initially, most of these migrants expected to eventually return home; consequently, they often made little effort to adapt to French ways. When the boom period of the “thirty glorious years” ended in the mid-1970s, France stopped welcoming foreign laborers, although it allowed men already established in the country to bring their families. By

the early 1980s, it was becoming clear that most of the earlier immigrants had settled permanently in France. Many Algerians in France, for example, gave up hopes of returning to that country as its post-independence government turned increasingly dictatorial and its economy failed to develop. A new generation of children born in France to immigrant parents or mixed families complicated the situation: Would they be accepted in French society, or stigmatized as “foreigners” even though they had never lived anywhere else?

As unemployment began to rise in the 1970s and early 1980s, accusations that foreigners were taking jobs that should have gone to native French workers became more common. The economic situation made life more difficult for most immigrants as well. Most of them lived in crowded, run-down neighborhoods on the outskirts of France’s cities. The sense of hopelessness that gripped many of them provided conditions for the spread of crime and other social problems, dramatized in novels such as Mehdi Charef’s *Tea in the Harem*. In the early 1980s, several riots in these suburban ghettos thrust their problems onto the front pages of French newspapers. Muslim groups from North Africa faced the strongest obstacles to acceptance in France, because of their desire to maintain some aspects of their distinctive religion and culture. In the early 1980s, *beurs*, the French-born descendants of this community, became a highly visible group, with a distinctive identity centered around institutions such as *Radio Beur*, a station founded after the end of government controls on radio broadcasting.

The immigrant issue was politicized by the rise of the *Front National*. The party’s platform blamed non-European immigrants for causing crime and unemployment, and revived the old *Action française* slogan “La France aux français” (“France for the French”). Prejudices against immigrants whose appearance and behavior clearly revealed their origins were not limited to followers of Le Pen, however. A sociological inquiry at the end of the 1980s concluded that a substantial part of the population considered non-European immigrants a threat to France’s national and cultural identity. Interviewees told the researchers that immigrants were too noisy, that “they take French people’s jobs,” that “they speak their own language and you don’t understand anything,” and that they took unfair advantage of France’s welfare system.² In response to a wave of racist incidents in the early 1980s, the Mitterrand government helped promote *SOS-Racisme*, a movement for civil rights that was particularly successful with younger people and the media, but its slogans did little to change underlying attitudes.

“Cohabitation” and the Headscarf Controversy

The five-year mandate of the legislature elected in 1981 ran out in 1986, and voters disillusioned with the Socialists gave the rightwing opposition a majority. The election results subjected the institutions of the Fifth Republic to a new test: “cohabitation” between a president from one side of the political spectrum and a prime minister representing the other. Jacques Chirac, the popular Gaullist mayor of Paris, became prime minister. He pledged to adopt policies that would reduce the government’s role in the economy, and bring France in line with Ronald Reagan’s program in the United States and Margaret Thatcher’s in Britain. He cut tax rates, eliminated the requirement that employers get government permission before laying off workers, and reprivatized some of the companies nationalized after 1981. In a break from a decades-old tradition, the Chirac government even sold one of the public television

channels to a private owner, giving commercial interests control over what many French citizens had long considered a public service.

There had been much speculation as to how François Mitterrand would react to a situation in which day-to-day policy making was in the hands of one of his chief political opponents—indeed, his anticipated rival in the upcoming presidential election. The “cohabitation” episode showed that the man many French had come to dub “the Florentine,” because of his evident relish for Machiavellian political intrigue, knew how to use institutions created by de Gaulle more skillfully than de Gaulle’s own political descendants. Restricting himself to foreign and defense matters and to occasional comments on domestic policy, Mitterrand managed to saddle Chirac with the blame for most of the country’s difficulties, particularly the continuing malaise of the economy. Meanwhile he reaped credit for his dignified conduct and his articulation of long-term national interests.

This first experience of “cohabitation” thus turned out to be a trap for Mitterrand’s opponents. In 1988, the voters rejected Chirac and rewarded Mitterrand with a second seven-year term. Legislative elections called immediately after Mitterrand’s reelection gave the Socialists just enough seats to reclaim the prime ministership. A cabinet headed by Mitterrand’s main rival within his own party (and would-be successor), Michel Rocard, resumed the modernizing and technocratic orientation adopted in 1983 that had been interrupted from 1986 to 1988 by the more aggressively probusiness policies of the Chirac government. Rocard, a longtime activist in the PSU (the splinter party that had represented the spirit of the “Second Left” in early 1960s), moved the Socialists even further away from their old Marxist traditions.

In an attempt to soften the impact of the continuing economic crisis, Rocard extended welfare-state protections by introducing a guaranteed minimum income, the RMI (“revenu minimum d’insertion”) in 1988. He also successfully defused a major crisis in New Caledonia, one of France’s few remaining overseas possessions, where a radical independence movement had taken a group of French gendarmes hostage. The New Caledonia crisis was one of the rare times in recent decades that a problem in any of France’s overseas territories dominated the national news.

It was during Rocard’s term of office that France became embroiled in the so-called *affaire du foulard* (affair of the headscarf), a controversy about the right of Muslim girls to keep their hair covered in public schools that has continued to bedevil the country ever since. The debate, set off in October 1989 when a school principal expelled three young women from a middle school in Creil, outside of Paris, crystallized concerns about French identity, the growth of the population of non-European ancestry, the French tradition of *laïcité* or secularism, and women’s rights. From the time of the Third Republic’s school reforms, French practice had been to bar students from wearing any signs or symbols that identified them as members of any group other than the French nation. The singling out of Muslim schoolgirls suggested to many that this rule was being used to discriminate against one particular ethnic group, a suspicion fueled by the eagerness with which the rightwing *Front National* seized on the issue.

Not all the opponents of the headscarf came from the far right, however. Defenders of France’s republican traditions argued that tolerating the headscarf would open the door to what they called “communitarianism,” the division of France among competing groups identified by religion or ancestry, and ultimately to civil conflict. This argument was often tinged with anti-Americanism: the United States was portrayed as a country splintered into rival ethnic and religious groups. While some French feminists argued

that allowing Muslim schoolgirls—the issue of Muslim boys was not raised—to wear the headscarf was a way of integrating them into the mainstream of French life by encouraging them to attend public schools, others saw the headscarf ban as a way of protecting these girls from pressures supposedly exerted on them by male relatives and religious authorities in the Muslim community. Rocard's education minister, Lionel Jospin, tried to calm the controversy by urging school officials to show flexibility in dealing with individual cases, but the issue resurfaced repeatedly in subsequent years. The rules on headscarves were alternately toughened and relaxed until a law passed in early 2004 formally prohibited them. The intensity of the feelings on both sides of the headscarf debate showed the seriousness of the issues about identity, secularism, immigration, and women's rights that it raised.

Rocard, whose ambition to succeed Mitterrand was no secret, was often at odds with the president. Mitterrand undermined Rocard's presidential hopes by reshuffling his cabinet in 1991, appointing Edith Cresson, the first, and so far, the only woman prime minister in French history; but she failed to stem the government's decline in the polls. In the early 1990s, the Socialists were rocked by a number of major scandals. An inquiry into their fund-raising practices led to a humiliating police search of the party's headquarters, and several ministers were eventually convicted of having stalled the adoption of an American-manufactured process for detecting AIDS-contaminated blood products in order to favor a French competitor, thereby allowing the disease to spread among French hemophiliacs. In elections for regional governments in March 1992, the Socialists' share of the vote fell to 18 percent, the level from which the party had begun its rise to power in 1971. Mitterrand dropped Cresson after only 13 months in favor of Pierre Bérégovoy, a former finance minister popular in business circles. Mitterrand also tried to revive his government's

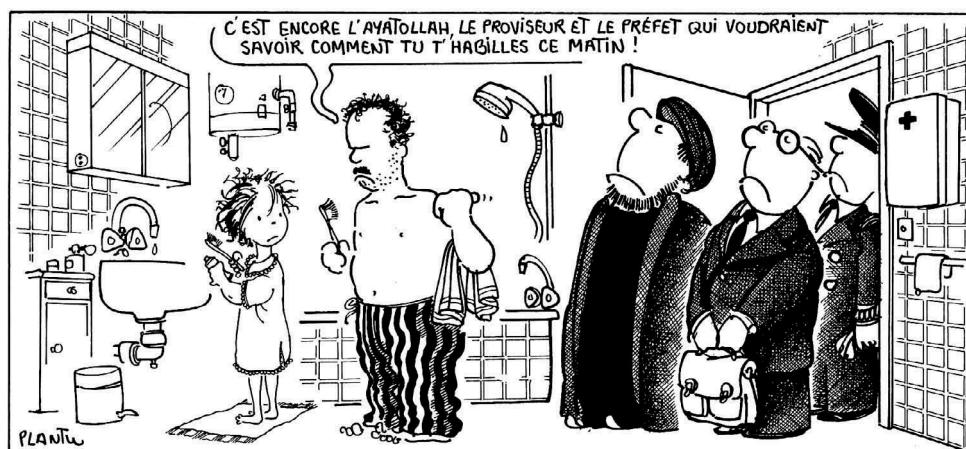


Figure 34.1 The “affaire du foulard” of 1989

When the director of a school in the Paris suburb of Creil banned girls from wearing hijabs or headscarves in class, a nationwide controversy about the place of Islam in French life and the rights of women erupted. The newspaper *Le Monde*'s cartoonist Plantu's image shows a father telling his daughter, “It's the ayatollah, the principal and the prefect again; they want to know what you're going to wear today.” (© Plantu, dessin paru dans *Le Monde* du 07/11/1989)

popularity by calling a referendum on French adhesion to the treaty for the transformation of the Common Market into the European Union, which had been negotiated with great fanfare at Maastricht in 1991. This move backfired when voters used the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the government, giving the proposition only a bare majority in September 1992, an indication that “Euroskepticism” had captured a good part of the electorate. Legislative elections in March 1993 completed the rout of the Socialists. Their conservative opponents won 80 percent of the seats in the Assembly. The defeated prime minister Bérégovoy’s suicide in May 1993 seemed to underline the collapse of the Socialist party’s fortunes.

Mitterrand’s presidential term still had two years to run after the Socialist election defeat in 1993, but the magnitude of the rightwing victory made it clear that his successor would be a conservative. Fearing a repetition of the embarrassment Mitterrand had inflicted on him during the first period of “cohabitation,” Jacques Chirac let Mitterrand appoint another conservative politician, Edouard Balladur, as prime minister. Balladur resumed the selling of publicly owned enterprises, started in 1986 but suspended after Mitterrand’s reelection in 1988. The rightwing legislature passed a set of strict new measures designed to limit immigration and to diminish the appeal of the *Front National*, a goal that was not achieved because the extremist party continued to gain supporters. Mitterrand’s last years in office were marked by a series of revelations about his personal past that cast a retrospective pall over his entire presidency. The admission that he had pressured his doctors to conceal the fact that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer as early as 1981 made many French citizens wonder if Mitterrand had ever really been fully honest with them. The public proved relatively tolerant of the discovery that he had maintained a long-running extramarital relationship and fathered an illegitimate daughter, but the fact that he had deliberately covered up the extent of his involvement with the rightwing *Croix-de-Feu* movement in the 1930s and his support for the Vichy regime in the early years of the Occupation made many of his former supporters doubt that he had ever sincerely embraced the values of the Socialist party.

Mitterrand’s admissions about his personal involvement with Vichy were linked in the public mind with a slow and painful process of coming to terms with the extent of collaboration during the war, and especially with French government officials’ complicity in the deportation of the Jewish population to the death camps. A series of widely publicized trials, beginning with the prosecution of the former German SS officer Klaus Barbie in 1987, produced testimony showing that several prominent French figures who had had long public careers after the war had been involved in these crimes and that politicians, including presidents Pompidou and Mitterrand, had intervened on behalf of men like Paul Touvier, a leader in the wartime *Milice*, and René Bousquet, who had organized the roundup of Parisian Jews at the Vélodrome d’Hiver in 1942. On the 50th anniversary of that event, in June 1995, Mitterrand’s successor, Jacques Chirac, definitively acknowledged French complicity in the wartime deportations. “On that day, France, the country of the Enlightenment and the Rights of Man … did something unforgivable. Violating its promises, it turned over those it should have protected to their executioners,” he said.³ Mitterrand, who had remained a personal friend of René Bousquet’s long after the accusations against him had become public, had not been willing to make such an admission. Mitterrand’s reputation took a final battering in 1994, when France, true to its policy of supporting almost any French-speaking government in Africa regardless of its policies, stood by while the Hutu regime in Rwanda launched a genocidal attack on the Tutsi minority. France had trained some

of the forces that took part in the massacres, and provided arms to the Hutu regime, but it made no effort to use its influence to prevent the killings.

The scandals and revelations of his last years in office were painful for a man who had been determined to leave his imprint on his country. His often-criticized penchant for costly architectural monuments in Paris (in addition to the glass pyramid at the Louvre, he sponsored a new opera house on the Place de la Bastille, a striking new building for the Ministry of Finance along the Seine, and a gigantic new National Library, which now bears his name) dramatically changed the landscape of the capital. Monuments were not the only way in which Mitterrand tried to leave his imprint on French history. His government spent heavily to make the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution in 1989 an occasion to consolidate France's reputation as "the country of the Rights of Man." For several years beforehand, France was blanketed with exhibitions and scholarly conferences devoted to the occasion, and a modernistic arch, taller than Napoleon's Arch of Triumph, was put up at La Défense, on the west side of Paris. The celebration of the revolution's bicentennial culminated with a lavish public spectacle on July 14, 1989, that was televised all over the world. Ironically, this elaborate celebration of 1789 was undercut by some of France's leading historians, particularly François Furet, whose "revisionist" interpretation of the Revolution emphasized its failure to establish functioning democratic institutions.

Mitterrand's presidency, it has been said, put an end to two powerful myths that had shaped much of French history: the myth of France as an autonomous nation-state, able to determine its own destiny, and the myth of a socialist utopia that would put an end to capitalism. Mitterrand's final place in history is likely to depend heavily on the long-term success of the project of European integration and of opening France up to the world economy to which he committed himself so strongly after the "U-turn" of 1983. Many of the groups that had supported Mitterrand in 1981 were disappointed by his subsequent policies. Although inflation was brought under control and economic growth was stronger than under Giscard d'Estaing, the promise of a rupture with capitalism was abandoned. These policies failed to bring the country prosperity, however. Unemployment continued to climb throughout Mitterrand's presidency, growing from 1.6 million in 1981 to over 3 million in the early 1990s. Few of the promises he had made to women voters in 1981 were fulfilled; in particular, the Socialists did little better at opening important political offices to women than their conservative predecessors. Mitterrand's skillful political maneuvering permanently weakened the Communist party, whose strength had long prevented a regular alternation between right- and leftwing governments in France, but the rightwing *Front National* took the Communists' place as a disturbing presence on the French political scene. Whereas the legacy of Charles de Gaulle's years in power was clear and unambiguous, Mitterrand's impact on France was much more mixed.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Jacques Chapsal, *La vie politique sous la Ve République*, 4th ed. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1989), 235.
- 2 Michel Wievorka, *La France raciste* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 10–13.
- 3 Jacques Chirac, speech of July 16, 1995, cited from web site of the office of the president of France at Wikiarchive, archive.wikiwix.com, accessed July 13, 2019.

35 France Enters a New Millennium

In July 1998, three years after the end of François Mitterrand's term as president, France hosted the World Cup soccer competition, and the national team set off a wave of euphoria by winning the championship for the first time. The fact that the team's hero, Zinedine Zidane, was the son of Algerian immigrants and that several other players, all of them French citizens, had roots in Africa, the French Caribbean, or in other European countries, was cited as evidence that the country now accepted the diversity of its population. France's victory also seemed to demonstrate that the country was ready to hold its own in the new globalized world of the twenty-first century. In the first years of the new millennium, however, both "les Bleus" and the country would experience dramatic ups and downs. In 2002, the French team exited ingloriously in the first stage of the tournament. Four years later, they thrilled their fans by returning to the championship final, only to lose when their star, Zidane, head-butted an opposing player who had hurled a racist insult at him, leading to his expulsion from the game just when his talents were most needed. In 2010, the French team made world headlines again when the players failed to score a single goal in their three games and staged a strike against their own coach. The affair took on the dimensions of a national crisis, and a government minister was dispatched to remind the team of the importance of its performance.

In the broader realm of public affairs, France also experienced both successes and crises after 1995. A solid period of economic growth under a generally respected Socialist government in the late 1990s ended surprisingly when the candidate of the far-right *Front National* eliminated that government's leader in the preliminary round of the presidential election of 2002. Official relations between France and the United States hit bottom in 2003, when the French led the opposition to the American government's decision to invade Iraq, but just four years later, voters elected Nicolas Sarkozy, a candidate who proclaimed his admiration for America. The progress France seemed to have made in assimilating its steadily growing population of non-European origin was thrown into doubt by a wave of urban violence in 2005. France's fate became increasingly tied to that of the European Union, especially after the country joined its neighbors in adopting a common currency, the euro, in 2001, but the French population's enthusiasm for the European project became increasingly shaky, as a vote against a proposed European Union constitution in 2005 showed.

Politics after Mitterrand

Although François Mitterrand's term lasted until 1995, the Socialists seemed so discredited after the legislative elections of 1993 that a rightwing victory in the 1995

presidential elections appeared inevitable. The big question was whether the winner would be the man Mitterrand had defeated in 1988, the Gaullist Jacques Chirac, or Chirac's long-time supporter Edouard Balladur, whom Mitterrand had named as prime minister in 1993. Once he found himself in office, Balladur developed presidential ambitions of his own. Balladur's economic policies were popular with conservatives. As a stalwart of the Gaullist party, Chirac had long been critical of France's commitment to the European Union, so he had to reassure a business community now firmly wedded to that institution, which Balladur supported.

Chirac ran a successful campaign, representing himself on television as a family man with strong roots in the rural region of the Corrèze, his electoral fief, and deemphasizing the neoliberal economic policies he had followed during his term as prime minister in 1986–1988. When he finally pulled ahead of Balladur in the opinion polls, few expected that he would have trouble defeating Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin, chosen by his own party at the last minute after several other better-known politicians had declined to represent a party whose chances seemed so slim. Jospin surprised everyone, however, by finishing ahead of both Chirac and Balladur in the first round of the election. Chirac won in the runoff, but Jospin's strong showing boosted the morale of the left and began a duel between the two men that dominated French politics until the unexpected result of the presidential elections in 2002.

Chirac, like his predecessor, Mitterrand, was a veteran politician more committed to becoming president than to any firm set of policies. Despite the folksy tone of his 1995 campaign advertising, he had had the typical education of a modern French politician, with degrees from the elite Institut des Études politiques ("Sciences po") and the École nationale d'administration. He joined the Gaullist movement in the early years of the Fifth Republic, and served as prime minister during the first two years of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's presidency. Chirac built a reputation for himself by becoming mayor of Paris, a post he held from 1977 to 1995; his popularity with the city's residents gave him a power base that survived even the Socialist electoral triumph of 1981 and his unsuccessful period of "cohabitation" with Mitterrand from 1986 to 1988.

Chirac's first two years as president suggested that he was more successful at winning elections than at governing. His new government, headed by Prime Minister Alain Juppé, modernized France's military by beginning to phase out the long republican tradition of linking citizenship with participation in the armed forces. Instead of requiring all young men to perform a year of military duty, France went over to a professional army. Chirac's insistence on conducting a series of nuclear-weapons tests in the South Pacific in 1995, however, caused protests throughout that region. At a time when the United States and Russia were reducing their nuclear arsenals, France's actions risked legitimizing other countries' efforts to acquire such weapons. France finally ended its tests and signed a treaty against nuclear proliferation in 1996.

More damaging to the rightwing government was Juppé's effort to reduce the cost of France's social security system, which had grown steadily since the end of the Second World War and was running large deficits. Juppé's proposal to trim benefits to government employees aroused strong opposition. Transport workers led a massive strike wave that paralyzed much of the country for several weeks in November and December 1995. The number of strikers approached that recorded during the strikes of May 1968, although most private enterprises continued to function. The reforms were

along the lines of measures enacted in a number of other European countries facing the same problems during this period, but Chirac and Juppé were unable either to convince the public to support them or to control the chaos caused by the strikes. Eventually, Juppé withdrew his more ambitious proposals, seriously undermining the government's credibility.

The 1995 strikes were a warning that the conservative government's popularity was less solid than the 1993 and 1995 election results suggested. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the last of the prominent intellectuals who had emerged in the years around 1960, found a strong echo for his denunciations of what he called a generalized assault on the principles of social solidarity embodied in the welfare state. Fearing further erosion of support, Chirac decided to exercise his presidential power to call for early legislative elections in May 1997, hoping to win a majority in the Assembly for the remaining five years of his term. Instead, voters turned power over to a coalition headed by Lionel Jospin's Socialists and their allies, the Communists, the ecologists (*les verts*, or "the Greens"), and several other small parties.

Few had expected the Socialists, so thoroughly discredited just four years earlier, to return to power so quickly. Although his coalition, dubbed the "pluralist left" because of its multiple constituents, had only a narrow majority, Jospin proved adept at managing it and soon established himself as a popular and competent leader, despite his rather stiff and stand-offish personality. Jospin's government was the Fifth Republic's third and longest experiment with "cohabitation," the coexistence of a president from one side of the political spectrum and a prime minister from the other. Confident that Chirac would not risk calling premature legislative elections again after his humiliation in 1997, Jospin also benefited from favorable trends in the global economy during his first years in office. The unemployment rate, which had been 12.5 percent in 1997, fell to below 10 percent by 2001. Jospin avoided the unrealistic economic experiments of the first Mitterrand government in 1981; in fact, he went further in selling off shares in state-owned businesses than any previous French government. France remained firmly committed to the process of European unification, and kept a tight rein on public spending in order to meet the standards imposed by the agreement setting up the new common European currency, the euro.

Jospin's signature achievement in the economic domain was the reduction of the standard French work week from 39 hours to 35 with no loss of pay, a reform intended to give workers more free time, encourage more flexible working arrangements, and generate new jobs. France's business community strenuously opposed this measure, claiming that it would raise costs and make the country uncompetitive. The complicated "Aubry laws," named for their author Martine Aubry, one of several prominent women cabinet members under Jospin, nevertheless were gradually implemented between 2000 and 2002. The effects on job creation were limited, but the laws did not cause the drastic problems some opponents had predicted. Since working hours could be averaged over a year, for example, employers were often able to give workers extra time off during slack seasons, rather than finding themselves short-handed when they needed peak production.

In addition to passing the 35-hour laws, the Jospin government distinguished itself from the rightwing cabinets of 1993 to 1997 in its handling of social issues. Welfare programs were reshaped to help the unemployed prepare to enter the job market, rather than relying on long-term unemployment benefits. In 2000, a law was passed guaranteeing all citizens health care insurance, either through private plans or through the

government. Some of the harsh measures against illegal immigrants passed between 1993 and 1997 were repealed, and legislation was passed to allow unmarried couples, including those of the same sex, to enjoy the same legal benefits as married ones by forming a “civil partnership,” known by its French acronym as a “PACS” (*Pacte civil de solidarité*). The first “Pride Parade” was held in Paris in 1999, inaugurating what has become a major public event, and in the 2001 municipal elections, Bertrand Delanoë, an openly gay Socialist candidate, was elected as the mayor of Paris, one of the country’s most visible political offices.

The Jospin years also saw the culmination of a campaign launched in the early 1990s to increase the number of women elected to public office. In 1992, several prominent female political figures had issued a manifesto, *Au pouvoir citoyennes! Liberté, égalité, parité* (“Take power, women citizens! Liberty, equality, parity”), which called for a requirement that half of all elected officials be women. A constitutional amendment to promote such “parity” was passed in June 1999, and legislation enacted in 2000 set quotas for the percentage of women candidates that parties had to nominate. The results were disappointing, however. Parties met their required quotas by nominating women primarily in situations where their chances of winning were meager. The number of women actually elected has increased, particularly at the local level, but France continues to lag behind most other western countries in this respect.

The “plural left” government’s first few years were generally serene, and polls regularly forecast that Jospin would defeat Chirac if the two men were the candidates in the 2002 presidential election. In 1999, the right and left collaborated to push through a long-discussed constitutional reform reducing future presidents’ terms from seven to five years. The idea was to make presidential and legislative elections coincide and reduce the probability of divided “cohabitation” governments. The reform was generally seen as a weakening of the presidency, and Chirac’s agreement to it as an acknowledgment that he was not cast from the mold of his more charismatic predecessors. Chirac’s re-election chances seemed enhanced when dissident members of Le Pen’s *Front National* tried unsuccessfully to oust its founder in 1999, and then quit to found their own party. It was widely assumed at the time that this would reduce support for the far right and drive some of its voters back toward traditional conservatism. In 2000, the end of the “technology bubble” that had driven world stock markets upward for several years dampened the economic climate that had buoyed Jospin’s popularity, and, after four years in office, his coalition suffered losses in local elections in 2001. Nevertheless, as the 2002 presidential election campaign began, no one anticipated that the prime minister would fail to reach the final round.

The assumption that Chirac and Jospin were bound to be the candidates on the ballot in the second round of voting in 2002 had the effect of encouraging a record crop of small-party candidates to enter the race. As was traditional in French politics, these candidates ran to show how much support their factions had within the larger right- and leftwing coalitions or to register a protest. Among the 16 candidates were three representatives of the extreme left; Christiane Taubira, a black woman from French Guyana whose candidacy promoted attention to race relations in France; and representatives of the many segments of Jospin’s “plural left” coalition. The issues stressed by the various campaigns seemed predictable and unlikely to sway most voters. The left ran on its positive economic record; rightwing candidates denounced the 35-hour week and what they called an alarming increase in crime and insecurity.



Figure 35.1 The Fast Pace of Technological Change

When the “train à grande vitesse” (“high-speed train”), popularly known as the TGV, went into service in 1981, France was the only European country with such a service. The TGV network now links major cities throughout the country, traveling at speeds up to 200 miles per hour, and has been extended into neighboring countries. A symbol of French technological prowess when it was first deployed, the French trains now face competition from foreign manufacturers, a sign of the constant effort required to remain up-to-date in a global marketplace. (Lina YING/Alamy Stock Photo)

As the election neared, polls gave Chirac a narrow lead over Jospin, but the last surveys before the vote showed an unexpected development: *Front National* founder Jean-Marie Le Pen moved ahead of Jospin into second place. Voting results on April 21, 2002, confirmed this: Chirac led with 19.9 percent of the vote, but Le Pen, with 16.9 percent, edged out Jospin, at 16.2 percent, for the second spot on the runoff ballot. Although the combined vote for all the leftwing candidates was well over 40 percent, their coalition had been so splintered that it would not have a representative in the final round. There was little danger that Le Pen would actually be elected president, but his defeat of Jospin rearranged the French political landscape. Politicians with similar programs had scored well in parliamentary elections in several other European countries, but the focus on the presidency in the Fifth Republic’s system made his success particularly visible. Le Pen’s racist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Semitic beliefs, his hostility to European integration, and his tolerance for violence—he had been barred from office for several years in the 1990s for physically assaulting a rival candidate—made his place on the ballot an embarrassment for most French citizens. To register their opposition to Le Pen, even voters who disliked Chirac had no choice but to rally to him. The final result was an anti-climax: Chirac made a record score of 82.2 percent, more than Charles de Gaulle had ever received, and Le Pen’s percentage

of 17.8 showed that he picked up few voters beyond those who had supported the *Front National* in the first round. Le Pen had, however, thoroughly disrupted the French political system.

Even though his score in the final round of the presidential election hardly represented real enthusiasm for him, Chirac was able to use the extraordinary situation to win an overwhelming majority in the national legislature, for which elections were held just a month after the presidential campaign. A hastily constructed new party, the *Union pour une majorité présidentielle* (UMP), imposed unity on the long-fractured parties of the conventional right. The “plural left” coalition was literally leaderless, Jospin having resigned his post and quit politics immediately after the first round of the presidential election. The UMP won 355 of the Assembly’s 577 seats, decisively avoiding another period of “cohabitation.”

France, America, and Globalization

France’s 2002 elections took place in the new world climate resulting from the spectacular terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, on September 11, 2001. The French public and the nation’s leaders reacted with horror to the destruction of the World Trade Center. The country’s most respected newspaper, *Le Monde*, normally regarded as critical of the United States, editorialized, “Nous sommes tous des américains” (“We are all Americans”), and the French government accepted American president George W. Bush’s decision to invade Afghanistan and overthrow the Islamic Taliban government, which had provided sanctuary for the Al-Qaeda organization that planned the attacks. In the fall of 2002, however, the American government began a campaign to win diplomatic support for an attack on Iraq, claiming that that country was on the point of developing weapons of mass destruction. France became the most vocal of several European governments that cast doubt on this assertion and opposed the idea of a war. The threat of a French veto effectively killed the Bush administration’s hope of getting the United Nations Security Council to endorse the invasion it finally launched in late March 2003.

Although the French doubts about American claims concerning Iraq’s weapons programs proved justified and the French position had wide support elsewhere in the world, American leaders were particularly irritated by France’s opposition to the Iraq campaign. Pro-war commentators labeled the French “cheese-eating surrender monkeys,” and politicians evoked the memory of American soldiers who had died fighting for French freedom in the two world wars. (They conveniently ignored the heavy losses France had sustained in the First World War and the role that American isolationism had had in making the German invasion of 1940 possible.) To some Americans, French opposition to the invasion of Iraq looked like a resurgence of anti-Americanism in France. It was also often interpreted as evidence of France’s reluctance to adjust to the realities of an increasingly globalized world, in which the efforts of a medium-sized country to maintain a distinctive identity were doomed to failure. In France, criticism of excessive American influence was often closely tied to a critique of a world economy dominated by the United States. For many on both sides of the Atlantic, the symbol of French resistance to Americanization and globalization was peasant activist José Bové’s highly publicized trashing of a McDonald’s outlet in the small southern town of Millau in August 1999. The media-savvy Bové, a veteran of the May 1968 movement who had moved to the countryside after its failure, charged that American fast food was both

un-French and unhealthy. In the name of profit, large corporations were imposing *malbouffe* (“bad eating”) on the population. Bové’s action made him an icon for the worldwide antiglobalization movement that was spreading rapidly at the time.

Although Bové was eventually brought to court for his actions, they evoked considerable support in France and even abroad. The transformation of world politics following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 to 1991, which left the United States as the world’s only superpower, revived concerns about the imposition of American values in France and in many other parts of the world. As Hubert Védrine, French foreign minister under Jospin, put it, globalization favored Americans’ interests “because of their economic size; because globalization takes place in their language; because it is organized along neoliberal economic principles; because they impose their legal, accounting and technical practices; and because they’re advocates of individualism.”¹ In response, French policy was to try to regulate world issues through multilateral agreements, and to insist that the laws of the marketplace should not be the only consideration in determining policies.

Although many in France were critical of Americanization and globalization, the notion that the country wanted to wall itself off from the world was misleading. Economically, France had become considerably more open to foreign trade and investment than the United States: By the end of the 1990s, foreign trade was equal to 49 percent of the country’s gross domestic product, nearly twice the proportion in the United States. Foreign investors held 40 percent of the shares of companies traded on the French stock market. French companies pursued opportunities abroad, showing that they could compete effectively in a global marketplace. French consumers were slow at first to turn to the Internet, in part because the country had its own, more primitive national online network, the Minitel, introduced in 1984, but by the beginning of the new millennium, Internet use had taken off. José Bové’s attack on McDonald’s garnered considerable public sympathy in France, but it was French consumers themselves who made the company’s ubiquitous French outlets successful.

While French politicians and intellectuals have frequently lamented the country’s inability to maintain its independence in the face of pressures for globalization, French business leaders have often demonstrated their ability to adapt and even profit from the new opportunities offered to them. The French *Carrefour* supermarket chain, present in countries in Asia, Africa, and South America as well as Europe, competes on equal terms with the American giant Walmart; and the French automaker Renault, now merged with the Japanese firm Nissan, has also done well around the world, even though few of its cars are sold in the United States. A model of how cooperation with European partners has allowed France to maintain a significant economic role is the success of *Airbus Industrie*, which shares the world market for large commercial airliners with the American firm Boeing. To ensure broad support, the manufacturing of Airbus planes is divided up among factories in France, Germany, Britain, and Spain, but final assembly is carried out largely at the company’s headquarters in Toulouse.

The economic arena is not the only place where France has shown the ability to function successfully in a globalized world. Médecins sans frontières (Doctors without Borders), founded in France in 1971 to provide medical services in crisis situations, has provided a model for a new kind of humanitarian intervention, prioritizing basic human rights over cooperation with governments. The annual Cannes film festival, held in France every spring, is the largest international forum for the display and marketing of new movies, bringing together filmmakers and stars from all over the

world, and the biennial Le Bourget air show serves a similar function for the aviation industry. Efforts to maintain the international standing of the French language have had more mixed results. The *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*, founded in 1970, brings together representatives of governments from 56 countries where French is spoken, including most of France's former colonies, but it has struggled to combat the worldwide influence of English. Chirac's government promoted laws meant to prevent the invasion of the French language by foreign words, but they have had only fitful success. French computer users refer to *le logiciel* rather than "software," but the growth of Internet use has allowed advertisers to bypass laws requiring the use of French. Anglophone visitors cannot help noticing the growing number of French citizens who speak English proficiently and are eager to practice their skills.

Another area in which events in the early 2000s reminded the French that they could not avoid engagement with the world beyond their borders was the growing concern with environmental issues. A devastating heat wave in the summer of 2003 gave the country a foretaste of the challenges that global warming could pose. The extreme heat was blamed for some 15,000 deaths, many of them elderly people unable to cope with the temperature in a country where air conditioning is a rarity. French citizens generally profess a concern for the environment. One historian has characterized the country as a "light-green society," where consumers seek out products advertised as "natural" and environmentally friendly, but in which policies that would require real economic sacrifice still meet with considerable resistance.

Domestic Issues in the New Millennium

The large vote for Le Pen in the 2002 presidential elections was a reminder that the integration of France's large population of recent immigrants remained a burning issue. The extensive publicity given to the ethnically mixed 1998 World Cup championship team generated a short-lived optimism about the assimilation of immigrant groups, but a "friendly" football match in Paris between the French and Algerian national football teams in October 2001 showed that sport could lead to increased tensions as well. The crowd, made up mostly of fans of Algerian descent living in France, booed the *Marseillaise* and the French players. The rising tensions in the Middle East were reflected in France itself, as radical Islamist movements won supporters in the dreary working-class suburbs where many immigrants lived; they were blamed for a wave of anti-Jewish incidents that reflected passions stirred by the violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Concern about Muslims in France expressed itself above all in the seemingly endless controversy about whether Muslim schoolgirls should be allowed to wear headscarves or *hijabs* (called *foulards* in French) while attending public schools. In December 2003, a commission appointed by the Chirac government recommended prohibiting all symbols of religious or ethnic identification in schools and other public institutions, and a law to this effect was passed in March 2004. Bernard Stasi, the commission's chair, told the press, "There are indisputably Muslims or ... groups seeking to test the resistance of the Republic, ... that want France to no longer be France." A young Muslim's response was, "Today, they forbid us from wearing veils. Tomorrow, they'll forbid us from being Muslims."² In November 2005 tensions in the suburbs, where much of France's Muslim population of immigrant origin lives, exploded after two teenage boys being chased by the police were accidentally electrocuted. Over a three-week period, riots dominated the



Figure 35.1 A Diversity of Marianne

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, France was becoming an increasingly multicultural and multi-racial society, and ideas about women's roles were changing. An exhibition of 13 different women posing as "Marianne," the symbol of the French Republic, sponsored by France's National Assembly in 2003, challenged citizens to consider new ways of thinking about the nation. (Christophe Calais/Corbis Historical/Getty Images)

news, as thousands of cars were set on fire, providing vivid television footage. French interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy, already recognized as a leading presidential candidate, fueled controversy by publicly referring to the rioters as *racaille* (scum) and promising to disperse them with a *Kärcher*, a high-pressure watersprayer used to erase graffiti painted on buildings.

Although the 2005 riots showed that France had reason for concern about ethnic tension, these years also saw some positive developments in this area. The new honesty about the French past that had led to recognition of the Vichy government's role in the persecution of French Jews during the Second World War was followed by new candor about other issues that had long been erased from French public memory. The 150th anniversary of the final abolition of slavery in the French colonies, commemorated in 1998, and the bicentennial of Napoleon's 1802 law reintroducing slavery, marked in 2002, created a greater awareness of how involved France had been with that institution. The 2001 *loi Taubira*, introduced by the deputy from French Guiana, declared slavery to be a violation of human rights. There was also a new level of honesty about French conduct in Algeria in the 1950s and early 1960s. In 1999, for the first time, the French government recognized that the conflict, previously referred to officially only as "the events in Algeria," deserved to be labeled a "war." Candid memoirs by several retired generals openly admitted that the French army had routinely tortured Algerian

prisoners, and documents about the police killings of Algerians in Paris in 1961 were made public. In 2005, the Algerian-born novelist Assia Djebar became the first author of North African origin elected to the venerable *Académie française*.

Despite the overwhelming majority Chirac and his party had received in the 2002 elections, they began Chirac's second term in office conscious that they owed their position to the presence of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the second round of the presidential vote rather than to the popularity of their own program. Chirac's prime minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, pursued a cautious policy in domestic affairs. He made only minor changes to France's retirement system, for example, and maintained the 2000 law on universal health insurance and the Aubry law establishing a 35-hour work week. As he had been in 1997 when he called and lost national legislative elections, Chirac was embarrassed in 2005 when he asked French voters to ratify a new constitution for the European Union. The measure's defeat slowed the EU's movement toward the "ever closer union" promised in its founding charter and testified to a deepening "Euroskepticism" in the population. Rightwing opponents like the Front National denounced the erosion of France's national sovereignty, while leftwing critics lamented the "democratic deficit" in its institutions, which often paid little attention to public opinion. The Socialist Party was especially conflicted about the referendum, with several major figures, including former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius, advocating a "no" vote. Those voters hostile to the European Union were further antagonized in 2008, when Chirac's successor worked with other European governments to approve many of the provisions of the 2005 proposal without submitting them to another popular vote.

Like other recent French presidents, Chirac wanted to be identified with a major addition to Paris's list of museums and monuments. He strongly supported the construction of the modernistic *Musée du Quai Branly*, devoted to art from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas, which opened in 2006. Critics denounced the new museum for isolating the items displayed from their cultural contexts; some of them were transferred from Paris's famous anthropology museum and other collections at the president's insistence. Nevertheless, the museum has been a success with the public, including French citizens of non-European ancestry.

The end of Jacques Chirac's second presidential term in 2007 occasioned much less reflection than the departure of François Mitterrand in 1995. Although his 12 years in office made him the second longest-serving president of the Fifth Republic, Chirac had pursued few distinctive policies. If it symbolized anything, Chirac's retirement, and his replacement by his much younger successor Nicolas Sarkozy, marked the passing of power to a new generation for whom political stability, a high standard of living, and a France thoroughly integrated into Europe and the world were conditions to be taken for granted, rather than ideals that needed to be fought for.

Notes

1 Cited in Philip H. Gordon and Sophie Meunier, *The French Challenge: Adapting to Globalization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 111.

2 Cited in Lexington, Kentucky, *Herald-Leader*, December 13, 2003, 1.

36 A New Age of Instability

From Chirac to Sarkozy

Knowing that Jacques Chirac was unlikely to seek a third term in 2007, other politicians in his own party began maneuvering to succeed him well in advance. The most determined of these conservative candidates was Nicolas Sarkozy, who had entered French politics at the end of the 1980s as the young mayor of the wealthy Paris suburb of Neuilly. Originally a protégé of Chirac, Sarkozy had alienated his patron by supporting Edouard Balladur in the 1995 presidential contest, but Sarkozy's undeniable talents made it impossible for Chirac to keep him out of the government after 2002. In that campaign, the right had blamed Jospin's Socialist government for being too soft on street crime. As Minister of the Interior from 2002 to 2004, Sarkozy encouraged the police to take a harder line, winning support from law-and-order voters who might otherwise have backed the *Front National*. Despite Chirac's opposition, Sarkozy succeeded in getting himself elected head of the president's own UMP party in 2004, which put him in a strong position to promote his presidential ambitions. In 2005, Chirac appointed one of Sarkozy's chief rivals, Dominique de Villepin, as prime minister, setting up a poisonous rivalry between him and Sarkozy, who once again served as interior minister. By the end of 2006, however, it had become clear that Sarkozy was more popular than de Villepin with conservative voters.

The 2007 presidential elections pitted the intensely ambitious Sarkozy against the Socialist nominee, Ségolène Royal. Both candidates were outsiders to the French political elite, even though Royal had graduated from the prestigious Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA), the normal training ground for French leaders. Sarkozy was the son of a Hungarian immigrant who had abandoned his family and of a part-Jewish mother; Royal was the first woman to be nominated by a major party and to have a serious chance of winning. In a country where politicians' private lives are normally shrouded in secrecy, both provided much grist for the media. Sarkozy's wife Cécilia, whom he had met when he officiated at her marriage to one of his friends, had left him briefly for another man two years before the election. The unmarried Royal had lived for many years and had raised four children with another leading Socialist politician, François Hollande, who had in fact run against her in the Socialists' primary process. The election was relatively close, but televised debates convinced most observers that Sarkozy was better prepared to govern. Some voters were clearly reluctant to vote for a woman candidate, and some Socialists questioned Royal's loyalty to the party's principles; a few even publicly endorsed her rival. Sarkozy won 53 percent of the vote, and the parliamentary elections held shortly afterward gave him a strong majority in the National Assembly.

Sarkozy quickly showed that his presidency would be as controversial as his rise to power. He had campaigned as a candidate for the common man in France, but he celebrated his election by taking a Mediterranean vacation on the yacht of a wealthy friend. His cabinet choices also constituted a major surprise. For the first time, women were named to head several of the “heavy” ministries that had previously been reserved for men, including the ministries of defense and finance. Three of Sarkozy’s ministerial appointments were women of non-European ancestry. He also gave major posts to several figures from the Socialist Party, most notably Bernard Kouchner, the founder of the international humanitarian organization Doctors without Borders. Sarkozy’s cabinet choices were clearly meant to change his image as a highly partisan figure with an anti-immigrant streak. The ideological diversity of his appointments, however, meant that it would be up to him to set coherent policies for the government.

Intensely publicity-conscious, Sarkozy soon became known as the “hyperactive president,” seemingly unable to let a week go by without some highly publicized announcement. His private life continued to attract attention: after his wife divorced him at the end of 2007, he quickly wooed and married Carla Bruni, an Italian-born model and singer, who broke with French tradition by continuing her own high-profile career. Sarkozy had run as an economic liberal, promising that he would change cumbersome government regulations and encourage the French to “work more to earn more.” To cut the size of government, Sarkozy announced that only one out of every two state employees who left their jobs would be replaced, a policy that created problems in schools and offices that lost large numbers of staff. Although he decided not to repeal the popular law establishing the 35-hour week, he tried to encourage greater productivity by loosening the restrictions on overtime work and reducing taxes on the extra wages workers earned. To satisfy wealthier supporters, he introduced a “tax shield” limiting the maximum tax rate to 50 percent. To put the government in a stronger position to impose changes in France’s welfare and retirement systems, Sarkozy’s prime minister, François Fillon, pushed through a law in August 2007 that required public service unions to announce strikes in advance and to furnish a “minimum service” that would prevent a repetition of the paralyzing work stoppages that had blocked Alain Juppé’s reform efforts in 1995. Sarkozy’s creation of a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity suggested that he was trying to appeal to *Front National* voters who saw a connection between these issues. His proposal to create a national history museum, an institution that France, unlike the United States and many other European countries, does not have, caused controversy. Critics denounced Sarkozy’s vision of the national past as narrowly “patriotic and centralizing,” ignoring France’s growing integration with Europe and the world and focusing too much on “great men,” and the project was cancelled by his successor in 2012.

In contrast to most French politicians, Sarkozy declared himself an unabashed admirer of the United States, which he saw as a country that encouraged economic initiative, and he set out to improve Franco-American relations, which had already begun to recover from the dispute over the Iraq War. For the first time since 1966, France officially rejoined NATO’s military structure. France under Sarkozy also remained a committed participant in the European Union. Eager to show that the country could still play an important independent role in world affairs, Sarkozy announced a plan for a “Mediterranean Community” that would increase ties between

the countries of southern Europe and those of North Africa and the Middle East. Like many of Sarkozy's widely publicized policy initiatives, this proposal did not have many practical results. A speech in the Senegalese capital of Dakar in July 2007 in which Sarkozy patronizingly announced that "the drama of Africa is that the African has never really entered into history," on the other hand, alienated opinion throughout a continent where France claimed to hold a special position.¹

France and the "Great Recession"

Sarkozy had been elected on promises of reducing government deficits and the state role in the economy, but he spent most of his term dealing with the "Great Recession," the world financial crisis that exploded in the fall of September 2008. Rather than cutting government spending, his government responded to the crisis by increasing it in order to provide economic stimulus, and by aiding French banks and key industrial sectors. Public protests against the deteriorating economy in metropolitan France were relatively muted, but in the French Caribbean territory of Guadeloupe, a general strike forced the government to increase the minimum wage and make other concessions. By early 2010, with economic growth remaining low and unemployment rising, Sarkozy's popularity in opinion polls had fallen sharply. In March 2010, voters gave the Socialist opposition a majority in 21 of France's 22 regions. Sarkozy responded to this situation in classic French political fashion, by reshuffling his cabinet and announcing new measures against crime and illegal immigrants. His abrupt deportation of hundreds of Roma or Gypsies in the summer of 2010 brought a strong rebuke from the European Union. Later that year, he revived the debate about Muslim women by pushing through a ban on the *burqa*, the head-to-toe garment worn by a small minority of especially observant women in France.

As economic conditions appeared to be stabilizing, Sarkozy announced austerity measures to reduce the government deficit and a freeze on government spending increases. In late 2010, despite several massive protests, Sarkozy and Fillon pushed through reforms that eliminated many of the special pension plans for civil servants and raised the standard retirement age to 62, still considerably lower than in most other industrialized countries. World events continued to force sudden changes in Sarkozy's agenda, however. The "Arab Spring" uprisings in 2011 affected countries with which France had tried to forge strong ties. Determined not to be seen as a supporter of disgraced regimes in the region, Sarkozy became the strongest advocate of foreign intervention against Muammar Qaddafi, the dictator of Libya, and French air power played a major role in helping rebel forces defeat him. In the second half of 2011, however, Sarkozy's top priority shifted to saving the stability of the euro, the currency shared by France and most other European Union member countries, and maintaining the solvency of major French banks that had lent heavily to poorer European countries. Working in a somewhat strained partnership with Angela Merkel, head of the German government, Sarkozy was regularly in the headlines urging emergency measures to resolve the debt crisis threatening the euro.

Sarkozy's political difficulties raised the hopes of the Socialist opposition of defeating him in the 2012 election campaign. In May 2011, however, the leading Socialist candidate, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who had been serving in the prestigious post of president of the International Monetary Fund, was arrested in New York City on charges of having sexually assaulted a hotel housekeeper. Although criminal charges

against Strauss-Kahn were eventually dismissed, the scandal scuttled his campaign. It also cast a harsh light on the continuing strength of male privilege in France, as many of Strauss-Kahn's political allies initially shrugged off the accusations against him as insignificant, provoking outrage among many French women.

With Strauss-Kahn sidelined, the Socialists turned to François Hollande, the former partner of their 2007 presidential candidate Ségolène Royal (the two had ended their relationship after her campaign). Hollande was generally respected but not regarded as particularly charismatic. Voters responded to his assertion that he would be a "normal" president, less erratic and self-promoting than the incumbent, and to his promise to raise taxes on the wealthy to protect social benefits while also acting more vigorously to promote economic growth. Sarkozy, forced on the defensive, also had to worry about the challenge from the *Front National*. The far-right party was now led by Jean-Marie Le Pen's daughter Marine, who worked to "de-demonize" it by turning away from her father's anti-semitism and defense of the Vichy regime, emphasizing instead opposition to immigration and to France's membership in the European Union. In the first round of the elections, Hollande achieved a narrow lead over Sarkozy. The degree of voter dissatisfaction with the two major parties was reflected in Marine Le Pen's score of 18 percent, higher than her father had ever obtained, and the 11 percent of the vote that went to Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a candidate of the far left, which reemerged as a significant factor in French politics for the first time since the collapse of the Communists after Mitterrand's election victory in 1981. In the run-off round on May 6, 2012, Hollande emerged as the overall winner, defeating Sarkozy by 52 percent to 48 percent. Legislative elections, held a month after the presidential vote, gave Hollande's Socialist Party an absolute majority in the National Assembly and put him in a position to push for the policies he had highlighted in his campaign.

The Hollande Presidency

François Hollande had promised France a "normal" presidency, but he and the country quickly found themselves confronting a world that was anything but normal. Faced with difficult economic conditions, spectacular terrorist attacks, and a radical change in world affairs—signaled in 2016 by the British vote to leave the European Union in June and in November the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States—Hollande was unable to convince the country of his capacity to meet the challenges facing it. The low-key personality that helped him defeat the overbearing Sarkozy made him seem insufficiently "presidential" once he was in office. Hollande's poll numbers quickly plunged, and in 2014, his personal image took a battering when he was photographed sneaking out of the presidential residence at night on a motor scooter to pursue an affair with a young movie actress. His official partner, a journalist named Valérie Trierweiler, poured out her anger in a scathing tell-all book that badly damaged Hollande's reputation.

Hollande's first weeks in office were taken up with international meetings aimed at protecting the European Union from the possible consequences of a collapse of the economies in some of its weaker members, and much of the success of his presidency remained dependent on the outcome of that situation. France itself was still suffering from the aftereffects of the "Great Recession," and needed approval from the European Union for its high budget deficits. Hollande had hoped that he could persuade Germany, the dominant player in debates about the Union's fiscal policies, to soften

its insistence on policies of austerity that were hindering economic growth across the Continent, but his efforts proved unsuccessful. Hollande's government reversed the tax cuts for the wealthy that Sarkozy had enacted, but the pressure to make French enterprises more competitive that is hard to avoid in today's interconnected world soon drove it to adopt policies that critics saw as more favorable to employers than to workers. One of his moves to reassure the business world was his recruitment in 2014 of a brash young man named Emmanuel Macron as minister of the economy. A graduate of the ENA and a former banker who had worked in Hollande's presidential office for the first two years of his term, Macron was known as an advocate of economic reforms. To Hollande's frustration, however, none of his government's measures succeeded in making a substantial dent in France's unemployment rate, which remained high even as other European economies recovered from the recession. Workers, especially younger people, complained that the reforms to France's labor laws were forcing more and more of them into a situation of *précarité*, where they could at best find part-time and temporary jobs with few protections.

As he struggled to increase French economic growth, Hollande sought to show that his government was extending the definitions of liberty and equality by legalizing same-sex marriage. Same-sex couples had been able to form "civil unions" ever since the creation of the PACS in 1999, but the new 2013 law on "*mariage pour tous*" ("marriage for all") gave them the same rights as heterosexuals. Several other European countries had already taken this step, and Hollande did not expect major resistance, but an opposition movement that called itself the "*manif pour tous*" ("the manifestation for all") combined arguments in favor of the traditional family with carnival-like street demonstrations to denounce the measure. The size of the movement showed that a substantial part of the population "feel that they are being asked to accept a new kind of society without being asked their opinion," one commentator wrote.² Unable to stop the passage of the marriage law, the movement did succeed in blocking provisions that would have allowed same-sex couples to adopt children, a right that was only granted several years later under Hollande's successor.

The strength of the "*manif pour tous*" movement was just one indication of growing dissent from the moderately progressive consensus Hollande had imagined that he could count on. On the left, critics like Stéphane Hessel, a veteran of the wartime Resistance whose pamphlet, "*Indignez-vous!*" ("Time for Outrage") had become a bestseller after its publication in 2010, denounced the increasing distance between politicians and ordinary citizens and the effect of the neoliberal economic policies dictated by France's membership in the European Union. French-born economist Thomas Piketty's statistics-laden *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, published in multiple languages in 2013, argued that the capitalist system was bound to increase economic inequality unless strictly regulated, and geographer Christophe Guilluy denounced the educated elites who made up the Socialist Party's voting base for withdrawing into gentrified "citadels" in France's large cities and abandoning the poorer strata of the population. On the right, polemicists such as the journalist Eric Zemmour, in his "*The Suicide of France*" (2014) insisted on the impossibility of peaceful coexistence between people of different races and denounced feminist ideas. The online news site *Mediapart*, founded in 2008, challenged the traditional press and television outlets; leaked documents that it posted scuttled the careers of politicians from all parties.

The best-selling novels of the period often transposed these themes into fiction. Edouard Louis's *The End of Eddy* (2014) denounced the homophobic attitudes of the author's working-class family, but at the same time conveyed a vivid sense of the reasons why the poor might lash out at scapegoats for their deteriorating social situation. In *Submission* (2015), the gloomiest of present-day French authors, Michel Houellebecq, imagined French elites voting an Islamist party into power, and in *The Perfect Nanny* (2016), Leïla Slimani depicted a babysitter whose hatred for her smug bourgeois employers drives her to kill their children. Jacques Audiard's *A Prophet* (2009), a film about the radicalization of a young Muslim in prison, and Laurent Cantet's *The Class* (2009), which brought the difficulties of immigrant students in the French schools to the screen, explored the difficulties of assimilation and the growing tension between those at the top of French society and those left at its margins.

It was in this tense atmosphere that Hollande had to cope with a series of devastating terrorist attacks carried out in 2015 and 2016 by militants claiming adherence to the extremist "Islamic State" movement that had proclaimed a "caliphate" in parts of Iraq and Syria and called for a holy war against unbelievers throughout the world. Although only a handful of French Muslims responded to this incitement, the mayhem they caused profoundly shook the country. On January 7, 2015, two armed attackers stormed the office of the satirical weekly magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and killed 12 of its staffers. Created at the time of May 1968, *Charlie Hebdo* had kept alive the provocative spirit of that movement. Religious orthodoxy of all kinds was one of its regular targets; it had published cartoons mocking Islam, which made it a target for the terrorists, but it had also aimed barbs at Christianity and Judaism. As police were pursuing the perpetrators of the attack on the magazine, another terrorist invaded a kosher supermarket, killing several victims and seizing a number of hostages. These attacks, aimed not just at individual victims but at the principle of freedom of speech and at France's Jewish population, stunned the world. Leaders of dozens of countries flew to Paris to join an immense memorial march. Hundreds of thousands of mourners carried signs and banners reading, "I am Charlie." As a non-Muslim reader of *Le Monde* observed, however, even French Muslim citizens who wholeheartedly condemned the attacks might hesitate to embrace a slogan that identified them with a publication that "had shocked their faith with its caricatures of their prophet."³

Worse was to come. On November 13, 2015, terrorist commandos launched simultaneous attacks on the crowd at an international soccer match in Paris's main stadium and on cafés and gathering places in the city's 11th arrondissement. A total of 130 people were killed, including 90 victims murdered at the Bataclan music hall. The government declared a state of emergency and launched an all-out search for the surviving perpetrators. In spite of these measures, on July 14, 2016, another terrorist drove a heavy truck into a crowd celebrating France's national holiday in the southern resort town of Nice, killing 86 and injuring over 400 others. Like citizens of other western countries, the French realized that there was no foolproof way of protecting themselves from zealots willing to sacrifice their own lives in order to strike at what they saw as a hostile world.

Even as he ordered firm actions against terrorists and engaged French forces in the campaign against the Islamic State, Hollande was eager to show that his government was moving forward on other issues. In his memoirs, published after the end of his term, he took special pride in having hosted the international conference on responses to climate change that drafted the "Paris accords" in 2015, by which the governments

of all the world's major countries committed themselves to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. By the time he wrote his book, however, Hollande was uncomfortably aware that Barack Obama, the American president who had strongly supported this agreement, had been replaced by Donald Trump, one of whose first actions was to cancel his country's adherence to the agreement.

Eager to be seen as a leader on environmental issues, Hollande was more cautious in dealing with the issue of immigration. In 2015, when simultaneous crises in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa drove a wave of asylum-seekers to Europe, German Prime Minister Angela Merkel opened her country's borders, taking in more than a million. France limited itself to futile calls for European cooperation in distributing the refugees among its member states. Media reports on the dismal conditions in the "Jungle," an unauthorized refugee camp near the port city of Calais where illegal immigrants gathered, hoping to be able to cross the Channel to England, highlighted France's inability to find a humane response to the thousands of desperate people fleeing their homelands. A French sociologist, Isabelle Coutant, captured the complexities of the 2015 migrant crisis in her study of their impact in her own Paris neighborhood, *Les Migrants en bas de chez soi* ("The Immigrants Next Door"). Residents of her relatively poor area, many of them originally immigrants themselves, were generally sympathetic to the plight of the 700 refugees given temporary shelter in a vacant school in the neighborhood, but they complained about the noise, trash, and occasional fights among the largely unemployed men crowded into the building, and they blamed the city and national governments for imposing this burden on their *quartier* rather than asking wealthier parts of the city to step up to help.⁴ Integrating the settled population of Muslims in France remained a fraught issue as well. In the summer of 2016, local authorities in many southern French cities, a stronghold of the rightwing *Front National*, caused controversies by banning women wearing *burkinis*, swimsuits with headcoverings, from public pools and beaches, citing the principle of *laïcité* that prohibits religious symbols in public places. One French newspaper ridiculed these rules by publishing a picture of Catholic nuns at the seashore, asking whether they would be forced to remove their habits, but the bans had the support of much of the public, as well as Hollande's prime minister, Manuel Valls, an advocate of a strict definition of secularism.

Beset with controversies at home, Hollande found himself facing an increasingly difficult international environment as well. Russia's occupation of parts of the territory of its neighbor Ukraine in 2014 raised tensions in Europe. France joined the United States and its EU partners in condemning the Russian actions, but Russia's authoritarian leader Vladimir Putin refused to back down. The British vote to leave the European Union in June 2016 plunged that international organization into crisis. Although support for "Frexit," a French withdrawal from the Union, was far weaker than the backing for "Brexit" across the Channel, the rising tide of populism in Europe and elsewhere encouraged Marine Le Pen's followers and other "Euroskeptics." In November 2016, the populist tide rolled on, as Donald Trump claimed the presidency in the United States and promised a policy guided by the principle of "America First." France, firmly committed to encouraging multi-lateral international agreements such as the Paris climate accord and the 2015 agreement to limit Iran's nuclear program, was bound to find itself in conflict with the new American administration.

The Strange Election of Emmanuel Macron

The Hollande government's difficulties raised the hopes of the main conservative party. In 2015, former president Sarkozy, trying for a comeback after his defeat in 2012, persuaded its members to rename it "Les Républicains," symbolically laying claim to the country's core political values. Given that polls consistently showed the Front National's Marine Le Pen winning enough support to ensure that she would reach the 2017 presidential election's second round, the conservatives assumed that their candidate would be her opponent and would be able to rally the votes of all those opposed to extremism. The Socialist party was clearly in trouble. Opposition to Hollande was so strong that in 2016, party leadership informed him that he would have to compete in a primary to try to win the right to seek re-election; he understood that he would have few chances of winning the nomination. Jean-Luc Mélenchon, leader of the far-left "Les Insoumis" ("The Unbowed"), who had scored unexpectedly well in the 2012 race, was determined to run again, guaranteeing that the leftwing vote would be divided. Meanwhile, in the spring of 2016, Hollande's energetic minister of the economy, Emmanuel Macron, announced that he was founding his own movement, "En Marche!" ("On the March!") to promote a cross-party program of economic reform and progressive social ideas. Given that Macron was not even 40-years old at the time and that he had never held any elective office, few thought that he would have any chance if he ran for president, as he decided to do a few months later.

The course of the 2017 presidential campaign and the legislative elections that followed it produced so many surprises that the editors of a book analyzing the outcome called it "a veritable tsunami for the party system, comparable only to the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic."⁵ For the first time in France, both of the main established parties, the Socialists and the Republicans, chose their candidates through primary elections, and, in both cases, the primary voters rejected experienced front-runners—Hollande's prime minister Manuel Valls in the case of the Socialists, former Chirac prime minister Alain Juppé and former president Sarkozy among the Republicans—in favor of more extreme choices. The Socialist choice, leftwinger Benoît Hamon, had gambled on an agreement with Mélenchon's movement, which Mélenchon refused. The Republicans' nominee, François Fillon, had been prime minister under Sarkozy. He was the first major French politician in more than a generation to identify himself openly with conservative Catholic moral values, a bid for the support of those who had powered the "Manif pour tous" movement against gay marriage in 2013.

Fillon's attempt to present himself as a moral exemplar quickly exploded when he was indicted for having put his wife on the public payroll. Despite pleas from his own party, he refused to withdraw from the race, which turned into a four-way contest between him, Marine Le Pen, the leftist Mélenchon, and Emmanuel Macron and his newly created party, "La République en Marche." When the votes were counted on April 23, 2017, Le Pen, as predicted, qualified for the runoff, but, to the general surprise, she was only in second place, behind Macron. The candidates of the two parties that had dominated French politics for a generation, the Republicans and the Socialists, were eliminated; the latter drew less than 7 percent of the vote, as most Socialist voters cast their ballots for Macron in an effort to keep out both Le Pen and Fillon.



Figure 36.1 Defacement of Emmanuel Macron’s Campaign Posters

Emmanuel Macron, elected president of France in May 2017, ran on the slogan, “France should be an opportunity for all.” The defacements of his campaign posters seen in this photograph show that not everyone supported him. Nevertheless, most voters preferred him to the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen. (Paulo Amorim/VWPics/Alamy Stock photo)

It was generally agreed that Le Pen performed poorly in an acrimonious televised debate with Macron, spewing insults and giving confusing answers to questions about her policies. In the second round of voting, she nevertheless reached 34 percent, double the score her father had achieved in 2002. The result showed that a considerable portion of the French electorate shared her anti-immigrant views and her hostility to the European Union. However, Macron, who had stressed his plans for economic reform and his commitment to Europe, was the clear winner with 66 percent of the votes cast. Observers noted, however, that more than a third of the eligible voters either did not show up at the polls at all or else cast blank ballots, indicating their dissatisfaction with both finalists. Although Macron won two-thirds of the votes cast, his total was less than half of the potential electorate. As usual, the legislative elections that followed the presidential ballot gave strong support to the winner’s party, but Macron’s new formation was unlike any of the traditional French political movements. Half of its list of candidates, divided 50–50 between men and women, represented “civil society” and had never held political office before.

For all the publicity he had received during the campaign, Emmanuel Macron was still something of a blank slate for most of the French public. By the time he took office, they knew that he was articulate and full of ideas. The story of how he had convinced his high-school literature teacher, a married woman 25-years older than himself, to

leave her husband for him reflected his determination to overcome obstacles and his willingness to defy convention. In an interview shortly after his election, Macron made it clear that he intended to govern in a “Jupiterian” style, quite different from that of his predecessor Hollande. Although those who voted for him had leaned slightly to the left, the ministerial cabinet he chose, headed by Edouard Philippe, favored the center-right, reflecting Macron’s intention to try to break through the obstacles he thought were holding back French economic growth. Among the first laws he had the Parliament pass were a repeal of the tax on large fortunes that Hollande had imposed and a small decrease in rent subsidies, a measure that fell most heavily on the lower classes; opponents quickly labelled him “the president of the rich.”

Outside of France, Macron’s victory over Le Pen was hailed as a check to the rightwing populism reflected in Britain’s vote for “Brexit” and the election of Donald Trump. Macron’s full-throated support for the European Union and liberal values reassured those who feared the authoritarian tendencies that had surfaced in several of the member countries, notably Hungary and Poland. Accustomed to winning people over with the force of his personality and his rhetoric, Macron initially believed that he could persuade Trump to back off from his threats to withdraw from the Paris climate treaty and the agreement restricting Iran’s nuclear program—two major initiatives of Trump’s predecessor Barack Obama. Trump was greatly impressed by the pomp and ceremony of France’s Bastille Day celebration, to which Macron invited him in July 2017, but Macron was unable to change the president’s mind on policy matters. Nor was he able to have the galvanizing effect on European Union policies that he had hoped. Germany’s longtime chancellor, Angela Merkel, weakened domestically by her own party’s declining support, was no longer the powerful ally he had counted on, and the 2018 victory of a populist coalition in Italy, another of the EU’s major countries, strengthened the “Euroskeptic” forces within the organization.

In a pattern that has become familiar in France, Macron’s popularity declined rapidly once he was in office. Partly this reflected his determination to push through controversial reforms, such as the revision of France’s labor laws, the *“code de travail,”* enacted in 2017. Macron’s impatience with those who questioned his policies—he told one young man who complained about his difficulty in finding a job that “if I crossed the street, I’d find you one”—alienated many. A scandal involving one of his close associates, who passed himself off illegally as a police officer and was filmed attacking a demonstrator, suggested that the president and those close to him were acting as though they were above the law. The French national soccer team’s victory in the 2018 World Cup gave Macron a chance to pose with the players, but the boost to the country’s mood did not last long.

The biggest challenge to Macron exploded in the fall of 2018, when a series of demonstrations known as the “yellow vest” movement, because the participants wore the bright-yellow safety vests all French motorists are required to carry in their cars, rocked the country. Initially spurred by opposition to a proposed increase in the tax on gasoline, which Macron billed as part of his effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the “yellow vest” protests quickly turned into a broader outlet for the grievances of those who felt left behind in France’s increasingly unequal society. Demonstrators occupied the traffic circles in provincial towns, blocking traffic, and converged on Paris on weekends, where they filled the elegant shopping street, the Champs Élysées, and clashed violently with the police. The “yellow vests” had no acknowledged leaders and no defined program, but they clearly wanted “equality and respect,” as one

observer put it.⁶ Social media enabled them to organize and spread their slogans even without the structures of traditional protest movements. Macron responded to the demonstrations with a combination of police measures and efforts to show that he was listening to popular dissatisfaction. The gasoline tax that had set off the protests was withdrawn, and in early 2019, Macron announced a “great debate,” a series of town meetings across the country in which citizens were encouraged to voice their ideas about the difficulties facing France and how they might be addressed.

The government’s two-pronged response drained the “yellow vest” movement of much of its energy, but the fundamental questions it raised lingered. The issues facing France at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century are not country specific, but French traditions—such as the high degree of government centralization and the tendency to link particular issues to abstract philosophical principles—give French debates about income inequality, the assimilation of immigrants and the toleration of minorities, and the balance between national sovereignty and participation in Europe, a distinctly Gallic flavor. Despite its very real problems, France remains in many respects a fortunate country. With a population of 65 million in 2011, it has the sixth-largest economy in the world and provides most of its citizens with extensive social benefits and a decent standard of living. The political institutions of the Fifth Republic have provided political stability for more than 60 years. France’s integration into the European Union has for the first time in the country’s long history virtually banished the threat of a war with any of its European neighbors.

Nevertheless, France faces its share of challenges. Debates about national identity and the assimilation of the country’s minority populations remain heated. Comparative studies of minorities in major European countries often conclude that France, with its tradition of accepting immigrants as long as they are willing to assimilate to its religiously neutral secular culture, has been more successful than most of its neighbors in integrating newcomers. The terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016 and the continuing controversies about Muslim women’s dress show that the insistence on *laïcité* and assimilation has not resolved all problems. Recent immigrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa continue to experience discrimination in employment and poor living conditions. At the same time, members of France’s Jewish minority, who have thrived under France’s assimilationist system, have become increasingly pessimistic about their future in a country where, as they see it, antagonism from Muslims is now joined with traditional rightwing antisemitism.

Issues concerning minorities and identity are hardly the only major issues in today’s France. There are major disagreements about how to reform the country’s welfare system, its schools, and its system of labor relations. The “Great Recession” underlined the fact that France’s future is now tied more directly than ever to that of a world economy whose stability has been shaken by threats of trade wars. The dramatic 2017 elections have raised questions about the future of the French party system, and the continued rise of the populist *Front national* (which Marine Le Pen renamed the *Rassemblement national*, the “National Rally,” in 2018, as part of her effort to change the movement’s image) raises questions about the prospects of French democracy. A French version of the worldwide #MeToo movement against sexual injustice, under the slogan “*Balance ton porc*” (“denounce your pig”) revealed the intensity of some French women’s resentment of male privilege, although others, including the famous actress Cathérine Deneuve, objected to what they saw as the criminalization of “insistent or clumsy flirting.” The “yellow vest” protests have drawn attention to the

imbalance between France's prosperous modern metropoles and its dying rural towns and villages, as well as to the growing inequality of wealth in the country. The devastating fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral in April 2019 underlined the challenges of preserving the country's historical monuments. The high temperatures that proved so lethal in 2003 were a foretaste of the dangers that climate change is causing; a heat wave in June 2019 saw temperatures in Paris reach 108 degrees Fahrenheit. It is no longer possible for the French to imagine themselves as citizens of a completely autonomous nation-state with a universally admired culture. Nevertheless, the era of globalization has not eliminated France's distinctive character. French citizens, a more diverse population than ever before, have all been shaped in one way or another by the unique past of their country, which this book has attempted to explain. And they continue to bring a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the world.

Notes

- 1 Cited in Ludivine Bantigny, *La France à l'heure du monde. De 1981 à nos jours*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Seuil, 2019), 272.
- 2 Alain Duhamel, *Une Histoire personnelle de la Ve République* (Paris: Plon, 2014), 278.
- 3 *Qui est vraiment Charlie?* (Paris: François Bourin, 2015), 84.
- 4 Isabelle Coutant, *Les Migrants en bas de chez soi* (Paris: Seuil, 2018).
- 5 Ricardo Brizzi and Marc Lazar, eds., *La France d'Emmanuel Macron* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2018), 7.
- 6 Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, in Joseph Confavreux, dir., *Le fond de l'air est jaune* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), 65.

Appendix

For Further Reading

This short bibliography is meant to direct students to reference works that will help them find more specialized readings, to some of the more general books in the field, and to a selection of specialized monographs of particular interest. It has been updated to include works published up to 2019. With a few exceptions, it is limited to titles available in English. References to works in French can be found in the bibliographies of most of the books listed here.

Bibliographies, Journals, and General Reference Works

As of 2019, the *Bibliographie annuelle de l'histoire française* (1963–)—for decades the most comprehensive bibliography of recent scholarly books and articles on French history, in both French and other languages—is being transformed into an on-line resource, the *Bibliographie de l'histoire de France*, accessible through the web site of the Institut d'histoire moderne et contemporaine (imhc.ens.fr). There are several scholarly journals in English devoted to French history: *French Historical Studies*; *French History*; *Modern and Contemporary France*; *French Politics Culture and Society*; and the *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*. H-France, the international French historians' website, posts reviews of new books in French history, which are archived in searchable form. H-France also maintains an e-mail list for scholars in the field that students are welcome to join. As of 2019, the organization's web address is www.h-france.net.

General Histories

Few English-speaking historians in recent decades have tackled the challenge of providing a general overview of modern French history. The great French social and economic historian Fernand Braudel died before completing his *The Identity of France* (1988); the two volumes he finished put modern French social and economic history in a perspective stretching back to the Stone Age. The essays in Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory* (1996–1998), and *Rethinking France* (2001–2010) [two sets of translated selections from Nora's French project, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (1984–1993)], include many fascinating discussions of how the French memory of the past has been shaped. Patrick Boucheron and Stéphane Gerson, eds., *France in the World: A New Global History* (2019) is a collection of short histories emphasizing the connections between French and world history. Useful syntheses covering a more limited period are Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870: Culture, Politics and Society* (2001); Alice Conklin,

Sarah Fishman, and Robert Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870* (2011); Maurice Agulhon, *The French Republic, 1879–1992* (1993); Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (2002), and Tyler Stovall, *Transnational France: The Modern History of a Universal Nation* (2015). Laura Lee Downs and Stéphane Gerson, eds., *Why France? American Historians Reflect on an Enduring Fascination* (2007) brings together personal essays by a number of leading scholars.

Most of the volumes of the *Nouvelle histoire de la France contemporaine*, a series of high-level syntheses by leading French scholars, published beginning in the 1970s, are available in English; although varying in quality, they generally provide a good overview of the periods they cover. See Louis Bergeron, *France Under Napoleon* (1981); André Jardin and A.-J. Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction 1815–1848* (1983); Maurice Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment* (1983); Alain Plessis, *Rise and Fall of the Second Empire* (1983); Jean-Paul Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War* (1983); Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief, *The Decline of the Third Republic* (1985); Jean-Pierre Azéma, *From Munich to the Liberation* (1984); Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic* (1987); Serge Bernstein, *The Republic of Charles de Gaulle* (1993) and *The Pompidou Years* (2000). In France, this series was completed in 2002 by the publication of Jean-Jacques Becker, *Crises et alternances 1974–2000*. Many new multi-volume histories of France have come out in France in recent years, but none have been translated. David Thomson, *France: Empire and Republic, 1850–1940* (1968), is a useful collection of translated political documents. Olivier Wiewiorka and Christophe Prochasson, *La France du XXe siècle. Documents d'histoire* (1994), includes selections dating from the 1870s to the mid-1990s.

Broad Chronological Perspectives

In the heyday of the French *Annales* school of historiography, up through the 1980s, French historians insisted on the importance of viewing historical phenomena over long periods of time. It has not been easy to apply this recipe to the event-filled history of the past 250 years. Most attempts to do so have emphasized economic and social history. Economic history has been a somewhat neglected field in recent years; the major works in English are now rather dated. François Caron, *Economic History of Modern France* (1979), technical in approach, covers the entire period. Roger Price, *Economic Modernization of France 1730–1880* (1975), is useful for the first half of the period covered in this book, and Michael Smith, *The Emergence of Modern Business Enterprise in France, 1800–1930* (2006), covers one aspect of the story into the twentieth century. Rondo Cameron, *France and the Economic Development of Europe, 1800–1914* (1961), looks at the French contribution to industrialization beyond its own borders.

Annie Moulin, *Peasantry and Society in France Since 1789* (1991), and Gérard Noiriel, *Workers in French Society in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (1990), are good surveys of these topics. Theodore Zeldin, *France 1848–1945*, 2 vols. (1973, 1979), is a vast, sprawling essay that covers politics, culture, and social history. It is often fascinating but hard to digest. Charles Tilly, *The Contentious French* (1986), explores patterns in collective behavior over the past three centuries. René Rémond's *The Right in France* (1969), although limited to one side of the political spectrum, proposes a general theory about the structure of French politics applicable to the period from 1815 to the present. Peter Sahlins's *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (1989) revises accepted ideas about the formation of national identity in the

period from Louis XIV to the Second Empire. An ambitious argument for continuities in French thought is Sudhir Hazareesingh, *How the French Think: An Affectionate Portrait of an Intellectual People* (2015).

Specialized Titles: Select Bibliography

1750 to 1789

A classic interpretation of the connection between the Old Regime and the Revolution, still valuable for its many provocative insights, is Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, available in several English translations. Two classic overviews of Old Regime society and institutions are Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France Under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598–1789*, 2 vols. (1979, 1984), and Pierre Goubert, *The Ancien Régime* (1973). Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (2002), elegantly summarizes Old Regime and revolutionary politics. French- and English-speaking authors have both contributed extensively to research on social history of the eighteenth century, particularly on the lower classes; many of the best studies extend into earlier or later periods. An invaluable source from the period is J.-L. Ménétra, *Journal of My Life* (1986). A sample of specialized monographs includes Daniel Roche, *The People of Paris* (1987); Olwyn Hufton, *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France* (1974); Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (1989); and Timothy Tackett, *Priest and Parish in Eighteenth-Century France* (1977). Daryl Hafer, *Women at Work in Preindustrial France* (2007), and Clare Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France* (2001) introduce a gendered perspective. Jeremy D. Popkin, ed., *Panorama of Paris* (1999), is a selection of translated excerpts from an eighteenth-century book about everyday life in Paris, Mercier's *Tableau de Paris*. Studies devoted to the elites are much rarer. See the older work of Bernard Groethuysen, *The Bourgeois: Catholicism vs. Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France* (1968; orig. 1927); David Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie, 1690–1830* (1996); Christine Adams, *A Taste for Comfort and Status: A Bourgeois Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (2000); and Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century* (1985). On social structures in France's slave colonies, see Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, *The Plantation Machine: Atlantic Capitalism in French Saint-Domingue and British Jamaica* (2016), Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (2016), and Paul Cheney, *Cul-de-Sac: Patrimony, Capitalism, and Slavery in French Saint-Domingue* (2017). The most comprehensive recent book on French slavery, Frédéric Régent, *La France et ses esclaves* (2007) has not been translated into English.

The period's intellectual life has attracted numerous scholars. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (1966–1969), puts French contributions in a European context. Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (1998), is a leading contemporary French historian's overview of the movement's impact on French society. Roger Chartier, *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (1991), is shorter and more selective. Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (1994), is a readable study of underground books and publishers; some of its arguments are challenged in the two volumes of Mark Curran and Simmon Burrows, *The French*

Book Trade in Enlightenment Europe (2018). Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment* (2001), considers opposition to the movement, and Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution* (2009) links the Enlightenment to the upheaval that followed it. Works linking culture and politics at the end of the Old Regime include Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (1985), and Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs* (1993). Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters* (1994) and *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (2009), emphasize women's role in the Enlightenment, and Nina Gelbart, *The King's Midwife* (1998), celebrates one woman's contribution to medical progress.

Interest in the period's politics has revived strongly in recent years. Dale Van Kley has examined the role of the *parti janséniste* in *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution* (1996). The Old Regime's final attempts to change itself are analyzed in P. M. Jones, *Reform and Revolution in France, 1774–1791* (1995). The impact of the political crisis resulting from Louis XV's final attempt to silence the parliamentary opposition is the subject of many of the essays in Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (1990). Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France* (2000), and David Bell, *Cult of the Nation: Inventing Nationalism 1680–1800* (2001), offer contrasting perspectives on how royal policy helped prepare the way for the Revolution. Munro Price, *Preserving the Monarchy* (1995), traces French foreign policy in the era of the American Revolution. Alan Williams, *The Police of Paris* (1979), studies the day-to-day administration of the capital. Sue Peabody, *There Are No Slaves in France* (1996), considers legal debates over slavery in prerevolutionary France.

The Revolution and the Napoleonic Period

There are numerous general histories of the Revolution in English, including Jeremy D. Popkin, *A New World Begins: The History of the French Revolution* (2019), Peter McPhee, *Liberty or Death: The French Revolution* (2015), William Doyle, *Oxford History of the French Revolution* (1988), and Donald Sutherland, *French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for a Civic Order* (2003). François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (1989), includes topical articles on a number of personalities and themes of the revolutionary era. Three useful collections of translated documents are Paul Beik, *The French Revolution* (1970); J. H. Stewart, *Documentary Survey of the French Revolution* (1951); and Laura Mason and Tracey Rizzo, *The French Revolution* (1999).

On the origins of the Revolution, see Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the Revolution* (1947), and William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution* (3rd ed., 1999). Timothy Tackett, *Becoming a Revolutionary* (1996), follows the evolution of the National Assembly, his *When the King Took Flight* (2003) shows the significance of the king's failed attempt to flee in 1791, and a third volume, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (2015) examines the movement's turn toward repression after 1791. Rafe Blaufarb, *The Great Demarcation: The French Revolution and the Invention of Modern Property* (2016) has spurred a new debate about the Revolution's consequences. Malcolm Crook, *Elections in the French Revolution* (1996), explains a key aspect of revolutionary politics. Isser Woloch, *The New Regime* (1994), shows the movement's impact on civic institutions. Alison Patrick, *The Men of the First*

French Republic (1972), deals with the deputies of the National Convention. Timothy Tackett, *Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France* (1986), examines the social bases underlying the religious conflict, whose stages are recounted in Nigel Aston, *Religion and Revolution in France: 1780–1804* (2000). Colin Haydon and William Doyle, eds., *Robespierre* (1999), brings together a number of perspectives on its subject, who is also the subject of several recent biographies, including Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (2012) and Ruth Scurr, *Fatal Purity: Robespierre and the French Revolution* (2007). R. R. Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled* (1943), makes sense of the Committee of Public Safety's policies. R. B. Rose, *Gracchus Babeuf* (1978), looks at one of the most extreme revolutionary thinkers, while Jacques Godechot, *The Counter-Revolution* (1964), covers both thought and action. David Jordan, *The King's Trial* (1979), is a gripping account of that event.

François Furet's essay *Interpreting the French Revolution* (1981) opened a new era of historiography, focused on the Revolution's political culture. Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (1984), and Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution* (1988), offer stimulating explorations of this subject. Jeremy Popkin, *Revolutionary News* (1990), and Jack Censer, *Prelude to Power* (1976), deal with the newspaper press; Daniel Roche and Robert Darnton, eds., *Revolution in Print* (1989), surveys all the major media of revolutionary propaganda, and Emmet Kennedy, *Cultural History of the French Revolution* (1989), covers the entire range of cultural activities. Patrice Higonnet's *Goodness Beyond Virtue* (1998), is a provocative look at the Jacobin movement and its ideology.

With the dissolution of the Marxist paradigm, there is no convincing synthesis of the complex social history of the revolutionary period. Peter Jones, *The Peasantry in the French Revolution* (1988), gives an overview of the Revolution in the countryside, and John Markoff, *The Abolition of Feudalism* (1996), uses quantitative methods to explore this subject more deeply. Charles Tilly, *The Vendée* (1967), uses the counter-revolutionary peasant revolt to build a general model explaining social protest. The urban revolutionary movement is the subject of Albert Soboul, *The Sans-Culottes* (1964); George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (1959); and Richard Cobb, *The Police and the People* (1970). David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (2002), looks at the interaction between the Revolution and France's capital. On women during the Revolution, see Dominique Godineau's social history *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution* (1998) and the documentary collection of Darline Gay Levy et al., *Women in Revolutionary Paris* (1979); the controversial interpretation offered by Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (1988); Sara Melzer and Leslie Rabine, eds., *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (1992); and Olwyn Hufton, *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (1992). Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (2004), and Jennifer Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France* (2007), look at changes in family relations. Alan Forrest has examined two important groups in the revolutionary period in his *The French Revolution and the Poor* (1981) and *Soldiers of the French Revolution* (1990).

The literature on the revolution in the French colonies and the struggle over slavery has grown rapidly in recent years. On Saint-Domingue (today's Haiti), see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World* (2004) and *A Colony of Citizens: Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean 1787–1804* (2004); Jeremy D. Popkin,

You Are All Free: The Haitian Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery (2010); and Philippe Girard, *The Slaves Who Defeated Napoleon: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian War of Independence 1801–1804* (2012).

On the thermidorian and Directory periods, see Brontislaw Baczkó, *Ending the Terror: The French Revolution after Robespierre* (1994); Martyn Lyons, *France Under the Directory* (1975); Isser Woloch, *Jacobin Legacy* (1970), which looks at the period's leftwing movement; and Harvey Mitchell, *The Underground War Against Revolutionary France* (1965), and Jeremy D. Popkin, *The Right-Wing Press in France, 1792–1800* (1980), on royalist intrigues. James Livesey, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution* (2001), and Andrew Jinchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (2008), attempt to rehabilitate the Directory's democratic credentials, while Howard Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon* (2006), argues that it foreshadowed the authoritarian Napoleonic regime, and Ronen Steinberg, *The Afterlives of Terror: Facing the Legacies of Mass Violence in Postrevolutionary France* (2019) applies trauma theory to the revolutionary experience.

Philip Dwyer's two volumes, *Napoleon: The Path to Power* (2007) and *Citizen Emperor: Napoleon in Power* (2013) constitute the best recent scholarly biography of Napoleon. Louis Bergeron's *France Under Napoleon* (1981) emphasizes the experience of the French people rather than Napoleon's life. J. C. Herold, *The Mind of Napoleon* (1955), and Rafe Blaufarb, *Napoleon: A Symbol for an Age* (2007) offer selections from his letters and memoirs. Robert Holtman, *Napoleonic Propaganda* (1950); Gunther Rothenberg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (1979); and Isser Woloch, *Napoleon and his Collaborators* (2001), treat various aspects of the reign. Alan Forrest, *Napoleon's Men: The Soldiers of the Revolution and Empire* (2002), takes a look at the "Little Corporal's" armies, and David Bell, *The First Total War* (2007), traces the development of the period's "war culture." Frank Kafker and James Laux, eds., *Napoleon and His Times* (1989), documents historians' changing views of Napoleon over time.

1815 to 1870

Social historians have traditionally taken the greatest interest in this period, which saw the beginnings of French industrialization and the consolidation of bourgeois society. Roger Price, *Social History of Nineteenth-Century France* (1987), is a general introduction. Important monographic studies include Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes* (1973), a classic account of the problems of urban life; John Merriam, *The Red City* (1985), an excellent study of a provincial city; William Sewell, *Work and Revolution in France* (1980), looks at the development of working-class identity; and Maurice Agulhon, *The Republic in the Village* (1982), links rural social change and new political ideas. Denise Davidson, *France after Revolution: Urban Life, Gender, and the New Social Order* (2007), integrates gender and social structure, while Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750–1850* (2008), argues that postrevolutionary society was characterized by a new kind of personality structure. Bonnie Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class* (1981), shows that notions about the bourgeoisie must be changed to take women's experience into account, while Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary* (2003) challenges the notion that this was a period of bourgeois hegemony. Recent works on

women's history in this period include Rachel Fuchs, *Poor and Pregnant in Paris* (1992) and *Contested Paternity: Constructing Families in Modern France* (2008), Whitney Walton, *Eve's Proud Descendants: Four Women Writers and Republican Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (2000), Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin de Siècle* (2001), and Christine Adams, *Poverty, Charity and Motherhood: Maternal Societies in Nineteenth-Century France* (2010). On men's roles in nineteenth-century bourgeois culture, see Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (1993); William Reddy, *The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Post-Revolutionary France 1814–1848* (1997); Carol Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France* (1999); Steven Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (2004); and several of the essays in Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant Ragan, eds., *Homosexuality in Modern France* (1996). Mark Traugott, *The French Worker* (1993), contains excerpts from nineteenth-century workers' autobiographies. William Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture* (1984); Tessie Liu, *The Weaver's Knot* (1994); and Judith Coffin, *The Politics of Women's Work* (1996), examine workers' resistance to the imposition of capitalist norms and the sexual division of labor in manufacturing. Robert Bezucha, *The Lyon Uprising of 1834* (1974), is about the first major workers' revolt of the century, and Jeremy D. Popkin, *Press, Revolution, and Social Identities in France, 1830–1835* (2002), looks at the role of the media in the period's social conflicts.

Works on political history tend to be divided by regime. Two exceptions are Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne into Battle* (1981), a study of the development of nineteenth-century political symbolism, and Robert Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature* (1989), a well-illustrated history of political cartooning. On the Restoration, G. Bertier de Sauvigny, *The Bourbon Restoration* (1966), is a standard overview. Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater: The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815–1830* (2000), demonstrates that this period had an important participatory political culture. K. Steven Vincent, *Benjamin Constant and the Birth of French Liberalism* (2011), deals with the elder statesman of the period's liberalism. Sarah Horowitz, *Friendship and Politics in Post-Revolutionary France* (2013) examines the personal networks of the period's politicians. David Pinkney, *The French Revolution of 1830* (1972), describes the fall of the regime, and Peter Sahlins, *Forest Rites* (1994), takes an anthropological approach to the rural aspects of this event, while Jill Harsin, *Barricades: The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830–1848* (2002) covers urban revolution. Douglas Johnson, *Guizot* (1963), is a life of the figure most identified with the July Monarchy; J. P. T. Bury, *Thiers* (1986), examines the career of a figure whose activities spanned the regimes from 1830–1873; David Pinkney, *Decisive Years in France, 1840–1847* (1986), argues for the period's crucial importance in understanding French history, and Cynthia Bouton, *Interpreting Social Violence in French Culture: Buzançais 1847–2008* (2011), examines one major episode and its echoes in French memory. Pierre Rosanvallon's *Le moment Guizot* (1985) and *Le Sacre du citoyen* (1992) marked a turning point in evaluations of the period's liberalism. Edward Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France, 1830–1852* (1984), treats another dimension of the period's atmosphere. Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery: The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France, 1802–1848* (2000), treats the campaign against slavery, and Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword and by Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (2011) covers the early period of France's expansion in North Africa.

The literature on the 1848 Revolution and the Second Republic is copious. Karl Marx, *Class Struggles in France* and *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, and Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections* (1970), are contemporary accounts that greatly influenced subsequent historians. Roger Price, *The French Second Republic* (1972), is a reliable narrative and his *1848 in France* (1975) is a useful documentary collection. Ted Margadant, *French Peasants in Revolt* (1980), studies the rural insurrection of 1851; Mark Traugott, *Armies of the Poor* (1985), and Roger Gould, *Insurgent Identities* (1995), examine urban conflict. Roger Price, *The French Second Empire* (2001), is an overview of this important period. Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoleon: Celebrations of Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century France* (2004), offers a new perspective on relations between the regime and the public. Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment* (1995), and Sudhir Hazareesingh, *From Subject to Citizen* (1998), argue that the imperial period was critical to the later development of French republicanism. David Pinkney, *Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris* (1958), and David Jordan, *Transforming Paris* (1996), deal with Haussmann's transformation of the capital, while Sandra Horvath-Peterson, *Victor Duruy and French Education* (1984), examines the scope and limits of the period's reform efforts.

The period's many movements for social reform have generated another large body of studies. Frank Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris* (1962), is a classic introduction to the French Utopian socialists; Jonathan Beecher, *Charles Fourier* (1986), is a detailed study of the most imaginative of them. The feminist movement is the subject of Claire Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (1984); Osama Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (2010), shows how the Saint-Simonian movement was linked to French colonialism. Christopher Johnson, *Utopian Communism in France* (1974), analyzes Cabet's Icarian movement. K. S. Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (1984), is a sympathetic portrait of the not always likable prophet of mutualism. Ellen Furlough, *Consumer Cooperation in France* (1991), tells the story of a movement that had important practical results.

For the period's intellectual and cultural trends, the detailed narrative in F. W. J. Hemmings, *Culture and Society in France 1789–1848* (1987), is a useful starting point. The characteristics of the Parisian counterculture are analyzed in Jerryld Seigel, *Bohemian Paris* (1986), and radical ideas about art are the subject of Neil McWilliams, *Dreams of Happiness* (1993). Dominick LaCapra's "Madame Bovary" on Trial (1982) is both an analysis of the clash between cultural innovation and social conservatism and a plea for new approaches to cultural history. Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (1987), looks at the development of one of the learned professions. Thomas Kselman, *Miracles and Prophecies in Nineteenth-Century France* (1983), is about popular Catholicism, and the same author's *Death and the Afterlife in Modern France* (1993) deals with attitudes toward one of the fundamental features of the human condition. Carol Harrison, *Romantic Catholics: France's Postrevolutionary Generation in Search of a Modern Faith* (2014) studies the conflicting tendencies in early nineteenth-century French religion.

1870 to 1940

The great crises that repeatedly shook France during the Third Republic have always guaranteed political history a large place in the study of this period. D. W. Brogan, *France Under the Republic (1870–1939)* (1940), provides a lively narrative, written

under the influence of the regime's collapse. Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War* (1967) covers the military aspects of France's defeat in 1870, and Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune 1871* (1971) is a balanced account of the Commune. For a contemporary analysis that laid the basis for the interpretation of the Commune as the first "worker's state" see Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France* (1974; orig. 1871). Gay Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris* (1996), probes the significance of gender in the uprising. Katherine Auspitz, *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'Enseignement and the Origins of the Third Republic* (1982), fills in the Republic's ideological background, and Jennifer Hecht, *The End of the Soul: Scientific Modernity, Atheism, and Anthropology in France* (2003), recounts the scientific campaign against religion and its consequences, including the development of modern racism. J. P. T. Bury, *Gambetta and the Making of the Third Republic* (1973), covers the most important republican of the period; the same author's *Gambetta: The Final Years* (1982) treats the brief period of his ministry.

For the period from 1877 to 1914, there are many studies about the political crises of Boulangism and the Dreyfus affair. These include Michael Burns, *Rural Society and French Politics: Boulangism and the Dreyfus Affair* (1984); Frederick Seager, *The Boulangers' Affair* (1969); and William Irvine, *Boulangers' Affair Reconsidered* (1989), arguing for the importance of the movement's conservative connections. Jean-Denis Bardin, *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus* (1986), supersedes older narrative accounts; Norman Kleeblatt, ed., *The Dreyfus Affair* (1987), examines artists' involvement; and Christopher Forth, *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (2006), uses the affair to probe constructions of masculinity. Michael Burns approaches the subject through a study of Dreyfus's family in *Dreyfus: A Family Affair* (1991). Burns has also edited a book of documents: *France and the Dreyfus Affair* (2000). Eugen Weber, *Action française* (1962), follows the development of the most important of the rightwing movements to emerge from the affair. J. H. Jackson, *Clemenceau and the Third Republic* (1946), gives a somewhat dated account of its subject's life; a more recent study of the first half of Clemenceau's career can be found in Jack Ellis, *The Early Life of Georges Clemenceau* (1980), while Harvey Goldberg, *The Life of Jean Jaurès* (1962), is a classic biography of the great socialist leader. Caroline Ford, *Divided Houses: Religion and Gender in Modern France* (2005), examines the struggle between republicanism and the church. John Merriman, *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siècle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror* (2016) tells the story of the extreme fringe of the French anarchist movement.

Few periods have benefited as much from the upsurge of women's history as this one. Among the major monographs are Steven Hause, *Hubertine Auclert, the French Suffragette* (1987), on the bourgeois republican component of the movement and Charles Sowerwine, *Sisters or Citizens? Women and Socialism in France Since 1876* (1982), on women in the socialist camp. Jo Burr Margadant, *Madame le Professeur* (1990), treats the development of the teaching profession, while Linda Clark, *Schooling the Daughters of Marianne* (1984), examines the girls' school curriculum of the period. Women's issues were vital to the development of the French welfare state, as Elinor Accampo et al., *Gender and the Politics of Social Reform in France, 1870–1914* (1995), and Mary Lynn Stewart, *Women, Work, and the French State* (1989), have shown. The "new women" of the period are the subject of Mary Louise Roberts, *Disruptive Acts: The New Woman in Fin-de-Siècle France* (2002), and Elinor Accampo, *Blessed Motherhood, Bitter Fruit: Nelly Roussel and the Politics of Female Pain in Third Republic*

France (2006). Holly Grout, *The Force of Beauty: Transforming French Ideas of Feminity in the Third Republic* (2015) shows how cosmetics became part of women's everyday lives. The relationship between gender and citizenship is the theme of Judith Surkis, *Sexing the Citizen: Morality and Masculinity in France, 1870–1920* (2010); Joshua Cole, *The Power of Large Numbers: Population, Politics and Gender in Nineteenth-Century France* (2000); and Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century* (2011) analyze demographic concerns.

The history of France's Jewish community has become a thriving subfield in its own right, with the Dreyfus era occupying a central position. Major contributions include Paula Hyman's overview, *The Jews of Modern France* (1998), and the same author's *Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace* (1991), on the period before Dreyfus; Michael Marrus, *The Politics of Assimilation* (1971), on the Dreyfus era; and Paula Hyman, *From Dreyfus to Vichy* (1979), on the first decades of the twentieth century. Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942* (2002) deals with the years just prior to the Holocaust. Sophie B. Roberts, *Citizenship and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870–1962* (2017) covers the Jewish community in France's most important overseas possession. Pierre Birnbaum, *Jewish Destinies: Citizenship, State and Community in Modern France* (2000), connects the past and the status of Jewish people in present-day France. Ethan Katz, *The Burdens of Brotherhood: Jews and Muslims from North Africa to France* (2015) contrasts the experiences of these two groups over the course of the twentieth century. Other European immigrant groups have received little study in English; a good survey is Gérard Noiriel, *The French Melting Pot* (1996), which puts the issue in the context of recent debates about national identity.

The history of the French empire is another burgeoning field. For an overview of the French imperial experience in this period, see Robert Aldrich, *Greater France* (1996). Alice Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895–1930* (1997), is a major new assessment of French colonialism. The connections between imperialism and religion are the theme of J. P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880–1914* (2006), and Sarah Curtis, *Women Missionaries and the Revival of French Empire* (2010). Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (2011), argues that imperialism had more public support than is usually acknowledged, and Eric Jennings, *Imperial Heights: Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (2015) uses the history of one colonial city to trace the arc of French imperialism in Southeast Asia. Martin Thomas, *The French Empire between the Wars* (2005) treats the period when the Empire began to come apart. Joshua Cole, *Lethal Provocation: The Constantine Murders and the Politics of French Algeria* (2019) shows how an incident in 1930s Algeria impacted French politics.

The road from the defeat of 1870 to the outbreak of war in 1914 is explained in John Keiger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (1983). Keiger has also written a more extended work on French foreign policy, *France and the World since 1870* (2001). Leonard Smith et al., *France and the Great War* (2003), is a comprehensive overview of the ordeal of 1914 to 1918. Robert Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War* (2008), if it does not rehabilitate France's military leaders, at least makes their decisions comprehensible. Alistair Horne, *The Price of Glory* (1962), evokes the horrors of trench warfare in

unforgettable terms. Jean-Jacques Becker, *Great War and the French People* (1986), covers the home front; Martha Hanna, *Your Death Would be Mine: Paul and Marie Pireaud in the Great War* (2008) vividly recaptures the experience of both civilians and soldiers through one couple's intimate letters. Leonard Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience* (1994), helps explain why French soldiers endured this ordeal. Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjection in the French Army 1914–1918* (2008) tells the story of the colonial troops who served in the conflict. On women and the war, see Margaret Darrow, *French Women and the First World War* (2000). Antoine Prost, *In the Wake of the War: Les Anciens Combattants and French Society* (1993), is a condensation of a fundamental French study of postwar veterans' groups. Daniel Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (1999) and Leonard Smith, *The Embattled Self: French Soldiers' Testimony of the Great War* (2007), look at the development of war memory.

Diplomatic issues in the interwar period are treated in Walter McDougall, *France's Rhineland Diplomacy 1914–1924* (1978); Stephen Schuker, *The End of French Predominance in Europe* (1976); and Marc Trachtenberg, *Reparation in World Politics* (1980). Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe* (1975), is a comparative study that addresses French domestic politics in the 1920s. Socialist leader Léon Blum gets a sympathetic hearing in Joel Colton, *Léon Blum: Humanist in Politics* (1966), while his party is subjected to harsher treatment in Tony Judt, *Marxism and the French Left* (1986). Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making 1914–1924* (1966), deals with the origins of the new leftwing party. Stéphane Courtois and Marc Lazar, *Histoire du Parti Communiste Français* (1995), explains what the opening of the Soviet archives revealed about the French party's subordination to Moscow. The early Fascist movements are the subject of Robert Soucy, *French Fascism: The First Wave 1924–1933* (1986), continued in the same author's *French Fascism: The Second Wave, 1933–1939* (1995). Sean Kennedy, *Reconciling France Against Democracy: The Croix de Feu and the Parti Social Français, 1927–1945* (2007), reevaluates the largest mass rightwing movement of the period. Julian Jackson, *The Popular Front in France* (1988), is a well-balanced treatment, and agrarian protest movements are the topic of Robert Paxton, *French Peasant Fascism* (1997).

Social historians have found the period up to 1914 at least as rich as the preceding one. Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976), offers a broad argument about the changes in rural life and mentalities, a process recounted in personal terms in Pierre-Jakez Hélias, *The Horse of Pride: Life in a Breton Village* (1978). On urban workers, see Lenard Berlanstein, *The Working People of Paris, 1871–1914* (1984), which explodes the image of a unified working class concentrated in large factories and Kathryn Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy* (1986), on the impact of rival visions of unionism. Regional studies include, in addition to John Merriman's *The Red City* (see above), Joan Scott, *The Glassworkers of Carmaux* (1974), and Donald Reid, *The Miners of Decazeville* (1985), while Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly look at patterns of strikes over a long period in their *Strikes in France 1830–1968* (1974), and Michelle Perrot examines the strike phenomenon in detail for the period 1870–1890 in *Workers on Strike 1871–1890* (1987). Helen Chenut, *The Fabric of Gender: Working-Class Culture in Third Republic France* (2005), combines social and gender analysis, as does Laura Fraden, *Breadwinners and Citizens: Gender in the Making of the French Social Model* (2008) for the interwar period. Herrick Chapman, *State Capitalism and Working-Class Radicalism in the French Aircraft Industry* (1991), which goes from 1930 to the 1950s,

breaks new ground in this area. Tyler Stovall, *The Rise of the Paris Red Belt* (1990), deals with the implantation of Communism in the Paris suburbs. Two books that let French women recount the experience of the twentieth century in their own words are Bonnie Smith, *Confessions of a Concierge* (1985), and Emilie Carles, *A Life of Her Own* (1991).

Not all work in social history has focused on the lower classes. Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change 1878–1978* (1979), looks at changes in France's largest city and extends well into the twentieth century. Andrew Israel Ross, *Homosexuality, Prostitution and Urban Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (2019) highlights the sexual culture of the capital. Aspects of bourgeois life are touched on in Michael Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store* (1981); Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire* (1990); and art historian T. J. Clark's influential study *The Painting of Modern Life* (1984). Bourgeois mentalities and fears feature in one way or another in such works as Susanna Barrows, *Distorting Mirrors: Visions of the Crowd in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (1981); Robert Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France* (1984); Rosalind Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (1982); Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power* (1996); Edward Berenson, *The Trial of Madame Caillaux* (1992); Matt Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (1996); and Debora Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France* (1989). The petty bourgeoisie's political orientation is the subject of Philip Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (1986). Stephen Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising and Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (2001), and Kolleen Guy, *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity* (2003), both show how commercial advertising helped shape national culture. Nicola Cooper, *France in Indochina: Colonial Encounters* (2001), explores the cultural impact of France's Asian colonies. Two important contributions to the history of French social policy are Paul Dutton, *Origins of the French Welfare State* (2002), and Sian Reynolds, *France between the Wars: Gender and Politics* (1996). Christine Bard's *Les Filles de Marianne: Histoire des féminismes 1914–1940* (1995) covers interwar feminist movements, and Mary Lynn Stewart, *Gender, Generation, and Journalism in France, 1910–1940* (2018) tells the story of women journalists in this period. In *Violette Nozière: A Story of Murder in 1930s Paris* (2011), Sarah Maza uses a sensational case to examine gender concerns.

Roger Shattuck's classic *The Banquet Years* (1955) brings the turn-of-the-century avant-garde to life. George Weisz, *The Emergence of Modern Universities in France* (1983), looks at the development of modern intellectual institutions. Christopher E. Forth and Elinor Accampo, eds., *Confronting Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle France: Bodies, Minds, and Gender* (2010) adds to the literature on gender issues, which are the main theme of Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes* (1994), which shows how the war affected gender issues. Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars* (2005), is an important study of attitudes toward race. Charles Rearick, *The French in Love and War* (1997), deals with popular culture, and Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, provincials and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (1998), shows how the exposition shaped cultural identities. Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African-Americans in the City of Light* (1996), is about a very distinctive expatriate community's interactions with France. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, *The Color of Race: Histories of Race in France* (2003), brings together essays on the black experience in France over the past two centuries.

1940 to the Present

Philip Nord, *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (2010), offers an important reinterpretation of the relations between the prewar Third Republic, Vichy, and the Liberation. Robert Young, *France and the Origins of the Second World War* (1996), explains the policy background to the conflict, and popular historian Alistair Horne's *To Lose a Battle* (1969) ably recounts the military debacle. Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat* (1968), is a classic analysis by a participant who was also a leading historian. Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (1972), demolished many myths jealously defended by both participants and opponents of Vichy, a process continued in Michael Marrus and Robert Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews* (1983). Philip Burrin, *France Under the Germans* (1996), and Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940–1944* (2001), synthesize the scholarship on this controversial period. Bertram Gordon, *Collaborationism in France during the Second World War* (1980), looks at the organized collaborationist movements. John Sweets, *Choices in Vichy France* (1986), and Robert Zaretsky, *Nîmes at War* (1995), are regional studies. Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains* (2004), Shannon Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables and Strangers* (2008), and Nicole Dombrowski, *France under Fire: German Invasion, Civilian Flight and Family Survival in World War II* (2012) emphasize the daily lives of the population. Miranda Pollard, *Reign of Virtue: Mobilizing Gender in Vichy France* (1998) and Francine Muel-Dreyfus, *Vichy and the Eternal Feminine* (2001), treat the regime's attitudes toward women. Journalist Alan Riding's *And the Show Went On* (2010) is a lively account of collaboration among artists and writers in wartime Paris. Renée Poznanski, *The Jews in France during World War II* (2002), looks at the French experience of the Holocaust from the victims' perspective. Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (1994) has had enormous impact on understanding of French memories of the war period.

Olivier Wieworka, *The French Resistance* (2016) is an up-to-date summary of research on this subject. H. R. Kedward, *Resistance in Vichy France* (1978) was the standard account for many years. Charles de Gaulle, *The Complete War Memoirs* (1955–1960), is a magisterial narrative from a very particular point of view; the first volume of Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Rebel* (1990), fills in the Resistance leader's earlier life and nuances his account of the war. Julian Jackson, *De Gaulle* (2018) is a more recent study of the wartime leader and his subsequent career. Women's contributions to the Resistance are highlighted in Margaret Rossiter, *Women in the Resistance* (1985). Eric Jennings's *Vichy in the Tropics* (2001) broadens our picture of the war to include the colonies. Peter Novick puts the controversial purges of the Liberation in perspective in *Resistance Versus Vichy* (1968), and Fabrice Virgili, *Shorn Women: Gender and Punishment in Liberation France* (2002), analyzes the significance of the campaign against women collaborators. Sarah Farmer, *Martyred Village* (1999), examines the construction of postwar memory. Mary Louise Roberts, *What Soldiers Do: Sex and the American GI in World War II France* (2013) evokes painful aspects of the liberation that impacted Franco-American relations.

Much of the literature on French reactions to American influence focuses on the postwar period, although Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: The History of French Anti-Americanism* (2005), shows that America was an issue long before this. Yasmin Sabina Khan narrates the nineteenth-century saga of the French donation of the Statue

of Liberty in *Enlightening the World: The Creation of the Statue of Liberty* (2010), and Jean-Philippe Mathy, *Extrême-Orient* (1993), concentrates on French intellectuals' attitudes toward the United States. For the contradictory French responses in the postwar period, see Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French* (1993) and *The French Way: How France Embraced and Rejected American Values and Power* (2011); Christopher Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (2004); and Vanessa Schwartz, *It's So French! Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture* (2007).

Herrick Chapman, *France's Long Reconstruction: In Search of the Modern Republic* (2018) takes a new look at the neglected topic of the French Fourth Republic. Stanley Hoffmann's essays, inspired by the experience of the Fourth Republic, are fundamental for an understanding of the French republican experience as a whole: Stanley Hoffmann et al., *In Search of France* (1963), and Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal? France Since the 1930s* (1974). Philip Williams, *Crisis and Compromise* (1964), is a classic analysis of the malfunctioning of the postwar republic. Irwin Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France* (1992), revises accepted notions about the impact of American involvement in French affairs after 1944. Journalist Alexander Werth's *France 1940–1955* (1956) captures the day-to-day atmosphere of the postwar period, while another talented journalist, Bernard Fall, conveys the bitterness of the Vietnam conflict in his *Street Without Joy* (1961). Jean Lacouture's *Pierre Mendès-France* (1984) treats the Fourth Republic's most innovative premier. Tony Judt, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals 1944–1956* (1992), is highly critical of Sartre and his followers, the dominant intellectuals of the period. Robert Zaretsky, *Albert Camus: Elements of a Life* (2010) is a short biography of Sartre's major adversary. Kate Kirkpatrick, *Becoming Beauvoir: A Life* (2019) is the most recent biography of Sartre's longtime partner.

Richard Kuisel, *Capitalism and the State in Modern France* (1981), looks at the origins of economic planning and its eventual triumph after the war. Peter Amann, *The Corncribs of Buzet* (1990), examines the postwar agricultural revolution in two different stages. Anthropologist Lawrence Wylie's *Village in the Vaucluse* (orig. 1957), an analysis of life in a small town at the beginning of the 1950s, is a scholarly classic; additional chapters added to later editions give important insights into the social changes from the 1950s to the 1970s. George Ross, *Workers and Communism in France from the Popular Front to Eurocommunism* (1982), covers the evolution of one segment of postwar society. Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (1995), is a provocative reading of the cultural trends of the 1950s. Rebecca Pulju, *Women and Mass Consumer Society in Postwar France* (2011), and Sarah Fishman, *From Vichy to the Sexual Revolution: Gender and Family Life in Postwar France* (2017) show how women were engaged in and affected by postwar reconstruction, and Julian Jackson, *Living in Arcadia: Homosexuality, Politics, and Morality in France from the Liberation to AIDS* (2009), explains the development of gay subculture. Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (1998), explains how modern technology was used as a basis for asserting national identity.

John Talbott, *The War Without a Name* (1980), and Martin Evans, *Algeria: France's Undeclared War* (2012) are good narrative accounts of the Algerian war. De Gaulle's return to power is recounted from the general's point of view in his *Memoirs of Hope and Renewal* (1971) and, from a less one-sided perspective, in Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler* (1992). Philip Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur* (1980), explains the

motives of de Gaulle's foreign policy; Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (2001), is highly critical of de Gaulle's policies on the most important issue he faced; Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Postwar Era* (2003) explains how France lost the diplomatic struggle. Jim House and Neil MacMaster, *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* (2006), documents the campaign against Algerians in France that peaked in the massacre of October 17, 1961; Todd Shepherd, *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (2006), shows that the end of the war provoked a rethinking of French national identity. Daniel Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire* (2011) is a complex exploration of how images of primitivism functioned in the era of decolonization.

Alain Schnapp and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, eds., *The French Student Uprising* (1971), reprints documents from the 1968 movement. Raymond Aron's *The Elusive Revolution* (1969) is a polemical assault on the movement's pretensions. Keith Reader, *The May 1968 Events in France* (1993), and Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (2002), offer cultural interpretations. The intellectual reaction against the left after 1968 is covered in Michael Christofferson, *French Intellectuals Against the Left: The Antitotalitarian Movement of the 1970s* (2004), while Julian Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics: May 1968 and Contemporary French Thought* (2007), treats leftist movements. Claire Duchen, *Feminism in France* (1986), examines the formative stage of that movement; Tamara Chaplin, *Turning on the Mind: French Philosophers on Television* (2007), is a pioneering exploration of the interaction between thinkers and the broadcast media. Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Locating Bourdieu* (2005), surveys the life and thought of the man who was arguably France's most prominent intellectual in the last decades of the twentieth century.

J. Frears, *France in the Giscard Presidency* (1981), recounts the unhappy presidency of "VGE." The emergence of the new Socialist party can be studied in D. S. Bell and Byron Criddle, *The French Socialist Party* (1988). Françoise Gaspard, *A Small City in France* (1995), is a first-hand account of how the *Front National* gained power in one French community. Mitterrand and his presidency have inspired a number of books, including Alastair Cole, *François Mitterrand* (2nd ed., 1997); Julius Friend, *The Long Presidency: France in the Mitterrand Years* (1998); Ronald Tiersky, *François Mitterrand: A Very French President* (2003); and David S. Bell, *François Mitterrand: A Political Biography* (2005). Tim Smith, *France in Crisis: Welfare, Inequality, and Globalization since 1980* (2004), and Jonah Levy, *Tocqueville's Revenge: State, Society and Economy in Contemporary France* (2000), are critical accounts of French social and economic policy in recent decades; Timothy Vail, *Recasting Welfare Capitalism: Economic Adjustment in Contemporary France and Germany* (2010), gives a more positive view. Published prior to the "Great Recession" of 2008, all three of these works are now somewhat out of date. Joan Scott, *Parité! Sexual Equality and the Crisis of French Universalism* (2005), explains the campaign that resulted in the parity law, while Abigail Gregory and Ursula Tidd, eds., *Women in Contemporary France* (2000), covers a variety of aspects of women's lives. David Looseley, *The Politics of Fun* (1995), treats cultural policies in the Mitterrand years.

The headscarf controversy that has bedevilled French life for more than 20 years is analyzed in Joan Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (2007) and John Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (2007). The literature on France's non-European immigrant communities is growing rapidly;

significant contributions include Paul Silverstein, *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (2004); David Beriss, *Black Skins, French Voices: Caribbean Ethnicity and Activism in Urban France* (2004); and Dominic Thomas, *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism* (2006). Laurent Dubois, *Soccer Empire: The World Cup and the Future of France* (2011), uses sport as an opening to examine France's ethnic tensions. Mairi Maclean and Joseph Szarka, *France on the World Stage: Nation State Strategies in the Global Era* (2008), surveys France's adjustment to the globalized world economy prior to the "Great Recession" of 2008. One particular aspect of the Chirac presidency is covered in Sally Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac's Museum on the Quai Branly* (2007).

The dramatic years since the "Great Recession" of 2008 have generated a flood of new books in France, but scholarly historical literature on the presidencies of Nicolas Sarkozy, François Hollande, and Emmanuel Macron is still in its infancy. Those who read French can peruse Sarkozy's polemical memoir, *Passions* (2019), and Hollande's *Les Leçons du pouvoir* (2018). While Hollande was still in office, two journalists, Gerard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme, published an indiscreet account of their interviews with him, *Un président ne devrait pas dire ça* ("A president shouldn't say that") (2016), which caused its subject considerable embarrassment. Macron's electoral manifesto, *Revolution* (2017) has been translated into English, and an admiring journalist, Sophie Pedder, has published an account of his campaign and his first year in office, *Revolution française: Emmanuel Macron and the Quest to Reinvent a Nation* (2018).

Index

- “A Prophet” (film) 349
Abbas, Ferhat (Algerian leader) 248, 273
Abd-el-Kader (Algerian leader) 100, 118
Abd-el-Krim (Moroccan leader) 228, 230
Abetz, Otto (German diplomat) 262
Aboukir 67
absolute monarchy 25, 31, 147
académies 12, 22, 66; and essay contests 22
Académie française 20, 26
Action français 173, 194, 195, 229, 237, 240, 263, 269, 364; *see also* Maurras, Charles
Afghanistan 320
Agriculture 15, 16, 87, 115, 126, 159, 162, 283, 301, 311; before 1789, 15–16; and Common Market 299; crisis in 58, 158–159, 161–162; during Third Republic 158–159, 233; modernization of 301; and *phyllloxera* 161–162, 195; regional variation 2–3; soil quality 2–3, 14–15; traditional methods 14–16, 158–159, 233; and World War II 261, 266
AIDS 331, 369
Aiguillon, Duc d’ (royal governor of Brittany) 29
Air France 239
Aisne 213
Alain *see* Chartrier, Emile
Alain-Fournier (novelist) 199
À *La Recherche du Temps perdu* (novel) 236
Albert, Marcellin (protest leader) 195
Albigensian crusade 4
Alcan, Felix (publisher) 158
Alexander I (emperor of Russia) 77, 81
Algeciras 202
Algeria: colonization of 100; Dreyfus affair and 174–175; independence movement and 236; 248, 285–286; during July Monarchy 100, 118; during postcolonial period 328, 341; during Second Empire 130–131; during Third Republic 146, 155–156, 197; during World War I 214; during World War II 265, 272, 273
Algérie française 293, 297
Algerian Liberation Army 293
Algerian war 290–291, 292–293, 294, 295–297, 298, 310, 341
Algiers 167, 265, 272, 292, 296
Ali, Mehemet (Egyptian leader) 99
Alliance (Resistance group) 269
Alps 1, 2, 66, 233
Al-Qaeda (terrorist organization) 339
Alsace 1, 2, 3, 4, 31, 74, 117, 121, 140, 155, 156, 157, 163, 169, 171, 205, 214, 219, 220, 229, 257, 262, 267, 307; attempts to recover 157, 163; loss to Germany 147, 169; German annexation of in World War II 262, 267; recovery of after World War I 220
America the Menace: Scenes from the Life of the Future (book) 233
American Civil War 138, 155
American War for Independence *see* American Revolution
American Revolution 42, 55, 359
“Americanization” 233, 306, 339, 340
Ami du Peuple 243
Amiens, Peace of 74–76
anarchism 165
Annam 131
l’année terrible 141
anti-Americanism 288, 330, 339, 368
anti-semitism 113, 117, 146, 165, 171–175, 195, 245, 246, 248, 249, 250, 260, 263, 328, 338, 347; *see also* Dreyfus Affair; Drumont, Edouard; Statut des Juifs; Vichy
Apollinaire, Guillaume 199
Aquinas, Saint Thomas 4
“Arab Spring” 346
Arcadie (homosexual movement) 310, 322
Arch of Triumph 113, 333
Ardennes 2, 255, 256
À *Rebours* (novel) 1898
Argenlieu, Thierry d’(Admiral) 285
Armorican Massif 2

- army: in Algerian War 291–293, 294, 296; defense strategy 252–254; and Dreyfus Affair 171–172; and Franco-Prussian War 139–140; and mutiny at Nancy 53; in 1968 315; in 1990s 335; preparation for World War II 252–254; during Revolution 55–56, 58, 61; support of thermidorian reaction 68; during Third Republic 156; under Napoleon 81–82; after World War I 225; during World War I 204–206, 209, 213–214; World War II and 252, 255–256
- Army of Italy 72
- Arnouville, Machault d' (controller-general) 28
- Aron, Raymond (philosopher) 288, 370
- artisans 39, 120
- “Artist’s Studio, The” (painting) 130
- Assembly of Notables 34, 37
- assignats* 56, 65
- Assumptionist Order 179
- L’Atalante* (film) 241
- Au Bonheur des Dames* (novel) 182
- Aubrac, Lucie (Resistance activist) 269
- “Aubry laws” 336, 34–23
- Aubry, Martine (minister) 336
- Auclert, Hubertine (suffragist) 180, 364
- Audiard, Jacques (filmmaker) 349
- Auerstädt, battle of 77
- August 4, 1789, decrees of 41, 59
- August 10, 1792, *journée* of 56; *see also* Legislative Assembly; National Convention
- Aurore* (newspaper) 173
- Auschwitz 256, 263, 267
- Austerlitz, battle of 77, 123
- Austria 31, 32, 33, 52, 66, 74, 75, 76, 77, 80, 81, 132, 138, 169, 172, 251; war with France 52–54, 55, 61, 66, 68, 72, 74–75, 77, 80, 132
- Austro-Hungarian Empire 169, 203
- Austrian Netherlands *see* Belgium
- Austrian Succession, War of 28, 32
- L’Avenir* (newspaper) 97
- Avignon 2, 287
- Babeuf, Gracchus, (agrarian radical) 67, 68, 360
- baccalauréat 106, 237
- Baden 80
- Bailly, Sylvain (mayor of Paris) 49
- Baker, Josephine (dancer) 235
- Balkans 169, 203
- Balladur, Edouard (prime minister) 332, 335, 344
- Ballets russes* 199
- Balzac, Honoré (novelist) 16, 111, 112, 182
- Bank of France 73, 230, 247
- Bao Dai 285
- Barbie, Klaus (SS officer) 332
- Barbusse, Henri (writer) 212
- Bardot, Brigitte (actress) 310
- Barnave, Antoine (revolutionary politician) 49, 58
- Barras, Paul (politician) 65, 68, 72; *see also* Directory
- Barre, Raymond (prime minister) 320, 321
- Barrès, Maurice (writer) 172, 188
- Barrot, Odilon (political figure) 100, 116
- Barry, Madame du 28, 30
- Barthes, Roland (literary critic) 309
- Bartholdi, Auguste (sculptor) 155
- Basques 3
- Bastille 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, 53, 155, 353
- Bataclan theater 349
- “Battle of the Frontiers” 205
- Baudelaire, Charles (poet) 130, 188
- Baudry, André (homosexual militant) 310
- Bayle, Pierre (philosopher) 19
- Bazaine, General 139, 142
- “Beast of Gévaudan” 24
- Beauche 15
- Beauharnais, Josephine *see* Josephine, Empress
- Beaumont, Christophe de (archbishop of Paris) 29
- Beauvoir, Simone de (writer) 288, 289, 306, 309, 319, 369
- Being and Nothingness*, (essay) 266, 288
- Belgium 2, 55, 61, 66, 75, 84, 164, 203, 205, 206, 252, 255, 256, 262, 275, 282, 284; during World War I 203, 205, 206; during World War II 252, 255, 256, 262, 275
- Belle Hélène, La* (operetta) 129
- Belley, J. B. (legislator) 60
- “The Belly of the Legislature” (cartoon) 94
- Bérégovoy, Pierre (prime minister) 331–332
- Bergson, Henri (philosopher) 177, 199
- Bernanos, Georges (novelist) 241
- Bernège, Paulette (writer) 238
- Berry, Charles Ferdinand, Duc de, assassination of 86, 89, 95
- Berry, Duchess of 86
- Bertillon, Jacques (populationist) 187
- Besançon 4, 321
- beurs* 329
- Beuve-Méry, Hubert (newspaper editor) 287
- Bibliothèque bleue 23
- Bichelonne, Jean (administrator) 261
- Bidault, Georges (Resistance activist) 272, 278, 292
- birth control 87, 179, 181, 238, 269, 303, 308, 310
- Biscay, Bay of 1
- Bismarck, Otto von, (German prime minister) 138, 139, 140, 142, 147, 149, 156, 169, 201
- Bissette, Cyrille (abolitionist) 113
- Black Death 14
- Black Sea 131, 219

- blacks (in France) 3, 4, 14, 42, 46, 156, 228, 236; and French citizenship 51–52, 131
- Blanc, Louis (socialist) 113, 116, 117, 119, 129
- Blanqui, Louis Auguste (revolutionary) 99, 143
- Bloch, Marc (historian) 257
- Bloc national* 223, 224, 225, 228, 238
- Bloc républicain* 171, 172, 173, 175–178
- Blum, Léon (prime minister) 224, 229, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 273, 279, 281, 283, 324, 366; *see also* Popular Front
- Blum-Byrnes Accord 281, 283
- Bodin, Jean (author) 5
- Boer War 201
- “Bohemia” 184
- Bokassa, Jean-Bedel (dictator) 320
- Bolsheviks 223–224
- Bonald, Louis de (political theorist) 80, 85
- Bonaparte, Louis (king of the Netherlands) 99, 121, 363
- Bonaparte, Napoleon *see* Napoleon I
- Bordat, Toussaint (anarchist) 166
- Bordeaux 19, 54, 55, 56, 162, 206, 208, 256, 267
- Borotra, Jean (tennis star) 259
- Boulanger Affair 161, 163, 364
- Boulanger, Georges (general) 164–167, 171
- boundaries, of France 1–4
- Bourbon Restoration *see* Monarchy, restoration of (1814)
- Bourgeois, Léon (Radical) 176, 219
- Bourgeoisie 8, 9, 20, 22, 45, 54, 115–117, 120, 123, 125, 127–130; ascendancy of 34, 44, 45, 63, 83, 105–107, 114; in early nineteenth century 83, 102, 105–107, 108–109; in late nineteenth century 143–146, 158, 159–160, 165; in Old Regime 10–13, 20, 23; and Third Republic women in 180–181
- Bourget air show 341
- Bourses de travail* 166
- Bousquet, René 332
- Bouvier, Jeanne (seamstress) 182
- Bové, José (activist) 339, 340
- Braque, Georges (artist) 198
- Brasillach, Robert (writer) 264, 287
- Brazza, Pierre de (explorer) 156
- Brazzaville 268, 273, 284
- Brest, naval mutiny in, (1790) 53
- Breton, André (poet) 236
- Bretonne, Restif de la (writer) 8
- “Brexit” 347, 350, 353
- Briand, Aristide (prime minister) 196, 214, 226, 227, 234
- Brienne, Loménie de (archbishop of Toulouse) 35, 36
- Brion, Hélène (feminist) 212, 217
- Brisson, Jacques Pierre (journalist-deputy) 51, 52, 54, 55
- Brittany 2, 3, 4, 12, 27, 29, 36, 63, 159, 162, 176
- Brittany peninsula 1, 2, 256
- Brousse, Paul (socialist politician) 166
- 18 brumaire, coup of 58, 69, 71, 72, 74, 363
- Brunswick, Duke of 53
- Brussels 61
- Bucard, Marcel (fascist leader) 243
- Bugeaud, General 100, 118
- Buisson, Ferdinand (director of educational system) 153
- Burgundy 4
- burkini controversy 350
- Burrin, Philippe (historian) 261, 368
- Bush, George W. (American president) 339
- Cabet, Etienne 112, 113, 363
- Cadres* 311
- Caen 56
- Caesar, Julius (Roman emperor) 3
- Cagoule* 249, 269
- cahiers de doléances* (lists of grievances) 37
- Caillaux, Joseph (minister) 196, 202, 203, 214, 217
- Caillaux, Madame 199, 200, 367
- Calonne, Charles-Alexandre de (minister) 7, 34–35, 37
- Cambodia *see* Indochina
- Cambon, Paul (ambassador) 201
- Camelots du Roi* 194
- Cameroon 202
- Campo-Formio, Treaty of 68, 75
- Camus, Albert (author) 288, 289, 309, 369
- Canada 300
- Canada, French 3, 32
- Candide* (novel) 19
- Cantet, Laurent (filmmaker) 349
- Capet, Hugues 5
- Capetians 5
- Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (by Thomas Piketty) 348
- Carbonari 86
- Caribbean French territories in 3, 31, 32, 51, 60, 75, 118, 131, 156, 264, 297, 320, 334, 346, 360, 371
- Carmaux 177
- “Carnet B” 204
- Carnot, Sadi (president) 166
- Carolingian dynasty 5
- Carrefour* (supermarket chain) 340
- Carrier, Jean-Baptiste (revolutionary politician) 60, 63
- Cartel des Gauches* 226, 228, 247; *see also* Herriot, Edouard; Radicals; S.F.I.O.
- “Cartel du ‘Non’” 300
- Casimir-Périer, Auguste (banker and politician) 91, 95

- Castro, Fidel (Cuban leader) 310
- Catholic Church: anti-semitism and 172; before Revolution of 1789 1, 2, 4, 7, 12–13, 18, 19, 21, 27, 29, 47; Bourbon restoration and 86, 79, 86–87, 88–89, 97; challenges to 4, 18–19, 21, 48, 97, 112, 131, 135, 145, 153, 165, 171, 176; Concordat (1801) 74, 75, 78, 79, 88–89, 167, 175, 229; confiscation of lands of 56; during Second Empire 121, 137; education and 67, 74, 89, 112, 120, 122, 137, 148, 153–154; fascism and 229; during Fifth Republic 307–308; de Gaulle, Charles, and 268–269; during July Monarchy 96, 112; liberalization of 112; Napoleon I and 72, 78; nuns in 12, 107, 176, 180, 308, 350; revival of 79–80, 88–89; revolutionary reform of 48, 49; and social reform 168; during Third Republic 148, 149, 151, 153, 154, 156, 165, 167–168, 171–172, 175–176, 180, 187; Vichy régime and 259; women and 78, 149, 180, 237, 238; *see also* Lamennais, Félicité de; *Ralliement*; Separation Law of 1905; worker-priests
- Cavaignac, Eugène (general) 120–121
- Cavour, Camillo (Piedmontese leader) 131–132
- Céline, Louis-Ferdinand (author) 241, 264
- Celts 3
- Central African Republic 320
- Césaire, Aimé 236
- Cévennes mountains 4
- César (film) 241
- Cézanne, Paul (artist) 183, 198
- CFDT (*Confédération française démocratique du travail*) 312
- CFTC (*Confédération française du travail chrétien*) 225
- CGT (*Confédération général du travail*) 166–167, 177, 194, 196, 224, 225, 235, 244, 245, 246, 279, 283, 312; and Communist Party 224–225, 235, 244, 246, 279, 283, 312; establishment of 166–167; and fascism 244, 279; growth of 194; and opposition to World War I 204, 212; and Popular Front 235, 244–246; split of 224
- CGT—FO (*Force Ouvrière*) 283
- CGTU (*Confédération générale du travail unitaire*) 225
- Chaban-Delmas, Jacques (politician) 316, 318
- Chad 268
- Chagall, Marc (artist) 198
- Chamber of Deputies 93, 103, 115, 116, 124, 135, 208; under July Monarchy 115, 116; under Restoration 83, 93; under Second Empire 124, 135; under Third Republic 149, 150, 151, 163, 177, 196, 208, 224, 237, 243
- Chamber of Peers 83
- Chamberlain, Neville (British prime minister) 251
- Chambon-sur-Lignon 270
- Chambord, Comte de (royalist pretender) 142, 147–8
- Chamoiseau, Patrick (author) 118
- Champ de Mars 44
- Champagne 213, 367
- Chantiers de la jeunesse* 259
- Charef, Mehdi (novelist) 329
- Charlemagne 1, 5
- Charles X (king of France) 86–88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 97, 98, 105, 142; *see also* Monarchy, restoration of (1814); Revolution of 1830
- Charte* 83, 85, 87, 90, 93, 98
- Chartrier, Emile (philosopher) 234
- Chateaubriand, François René de (author) 79, 87
- Chateaubriant 270
- Chautemps, Camille (prime minister) 243
- Chauvin, Jeanne (lawyer) 180
- Chevalier, Michel (economist) 126, 133, 134, 135, 148
- China 131, 241, 310, 341, 343, 371
- Chirac, Jacques (prime minister and president) 320, 324, 329, 330, 332, 335–339, 344, 351
- Choiseul, Etienne François, Duc de (foreign minister) 32
- Cholera: epidemic of 1831–1832 95, 109; epidemic of 1849 109
- Choltitz, Dietrich von (German commander) 275
- Les Choses* (novella) 308
- Churchill, Winston (British prime minister) 264, 268
- Citroën (auto manufacturer) 210, 239, 306, 314
- Civil Constitution of the Clergy 48, 49, 51, 56, 60, 73, 74, 7; *see also* Catholic Church; National Assembly
- “Civilizing Mission” 67, 157, 297, 363
- Cixous, Hélène (philosopher) 322
- Clemenceau, George (prime minister) 163, 165, 224, 225; and Dreyfus Affair 173; fall of 223; and labor movement 195–196; and Versailles Treaty 218–220; and World War I 209, 216–218
- “Class, The” (film) 349
- climate, influence of on France 2–3, 14
- Clovis (first king of France) 1, 5, 113
- Club Méditerranée* 311
- Cobden-Chevalier Treaty 133, 135
- Cobden, Richard (trade representative) 133
- Coca-Cola 288
- Cochinchina 131
- Code Napoléon* 75, 76
- Cohn-Bendit, Daniel (student agitator) 313

- Colbert, Jean-Baptiste (finance minister of Louis XIV) 26
 Cold War 282, 283, 287, 317, 325, 369
 Colette (writer) 199
 collaborationism 240, 264, 272, 275, 368; *see also* Laval, Pierre; Vichy government
Collège de France 136
 colonial empire 1, 19, 196, 227, 232; “assimilation” policy in 118, 146, 197–198; breakdown of 284–286, 289–297; during French Revolution 51–52; during July Monarchy 100; during Revolution of 1848, 118; during Second Empire 130–131; during Third Republic 156–157, 196–198, 216, 120, 227–228; during World War II 273; *see also* Algeria; Canada, French; Caribbean; Ferry, Jules; Indochina; Morocco; Pacific, French colonies in; Saint-Domingue, Tunisia, Vietnam
 Colonial Exposition (1931) 227
Colons 291, 293; *see also* Algerian War
 Combes, Emile (politician) 175–6
Comédie française 97
Comédie humaine 111
comités d'organisation 260, 261
Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire *see* Cagoule
Commissariat du Plan 280
Commissariat du Sport 259
 Committee of Public Safety 57–58, 61; *see also* Robespierre, Maximilien; Terror
 Common Market *see* European Union
 “Common Program of the Left” 317
 Communist Party (PCF) 235, 245, 250, 254, 270, 277, 282, 288, 306, 315, 321, 326; in 1920s 227, 230, 235; CGT and 224–225, 235, 244, 246, 279, 283, 312; common program with Socialists 317; decline of 245, 327, 333; in Fifth Republic 291, 292, 300, 303, 304, 306, 312, 315, 317; formation of 224; joins Third International 224–225; Popular Front and 245–250; in post-liberation period 277–279, 282–284, 288; World War II and 270, 274
compagnonnages 9, 110
 “Companions of the Liberation” 307
 Comte, Auguste (philosopher) 136
 Concordat (1801) *see* Catholic Church
 Congo region 156
 Congregation of the Faith 89
 Congress of Tours 224
 Congress of Vienna 131, 218
Conseil d'Etat 73
 Considerant, Victor (socialist) 96
 Constant, Benjamin (novelist and political theorist) 79, 84, 85, 90
 Constituent Assembly 120–121, 278, 279, 285
 Constitution of 1791, 53, 59, 64
 Constitution of 1793, 59, 64; and “right of subsistence” 56
 Constitution of 1795, 65, 68
 Constitution of 1830, 113
 Constitutional Council 318
 consumerism 184, 233, 239, 247, 306, 308, 325, 340, 341
 Continental System 77, 80, 81, 88
 Convention *see* National Convention
 Corbin, Alain (historian) 187
 Cornwallis, General 33
 Corrèze 335
 Corsica 2, 71
Corydon, (by André Gide) 236
 Coty, François (industrialist) 243
 Council of Elders 65
 Council of Ministers 151
 Council of the Republic 280
 Council of State *see* *Conseil d'Etat*
 Courbet, Gustave (artist) 130
 Courrières 195
 Cousin, Victor (philosopher) 89, 105, 135
 Coutant, Isabelle (sociologist) 350
Creative Evolution (book) 199
Crédit Mobilier 126, 134
 Crémieux law 146, 172, 263
 creoles 4
 Cresson, Edith (prime minister) 331
 Crimean War 131
Croix de feu 248
Croix, La (newspaper) 175
Crowd Psychology (book) 188
 Cuba 310
 Cuban missile crisis 299
 Cubism 183, 198
curés 12
 Czechoslovakia 225, 251, 252, 300, 313

 D-Day landings 274
 Dahra, massacre of 100
 Dai, Bao (Vietnamese leader) 285
 Dakar 268, 346
 Daladier, Edouard (Radical politician) 244, 249, 251, 254, 259
 Damiens, Robert (assassin) 29
 Danton, Georges (revolutionary) 55, 61
 Darlan, Admiral François (Vichy prime minister) 262, 265, 272
 Daumier, Honoré (political cartoonist) 94, 95, 117
 Dauphiné 36, 37
 David, Jacques Louis (artist) 78
 Déat, Marcel (socialist and collaborationist) 240, 251, 264, 272
 “Death of Sardanapalus” (painting) 90
Death on the Installment Plan (novel) 241

- Debré, Michel (prime minister) 302
 Debussy, Claude (composer) 188
 Decazes, Elie (minister) 85–86
 December 2, 1851, coup d'état of 123; *see also* Napoleon III
 “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” 41, 42, 56
 “Declaration of the Rights of Woman” 59
 de-Christianization 59
 deconstructionism 322
Le Défi américain (book) 302
 Defferre, Gaston (colonies minister) 295
 Degas, Edgar (artist) 183
 De Gaulle, Charles *see* Gaulle, Charles de
 De Gaulle, Josephine *see* Gaulle, Josephine de
 Delacroix, Eugène (artist) 90, 92
 Delafosse, Maurice (West Africa expert) 227–228
 Delanoë, Bertrand (mayor of Paris) 337
 Delcassé, Théophile (foreign minister) 170, 201–202
Délégation des Gauches 177
Democracy in America (book) 113
 Democratic Feminist Movement 303
Démoc-socs 121
 Denmark 316
départements et territoires d'outre-mer (DOM-TOM) 297
 departments, division of France into 46, 47, 48
 Deraimes, Maria (feminist) 180
 Derain, André (artist) 198
 Deroïn, Jeanne (feminist militant) 121
 Deroulède, Paul (nationalist) 164, 165, 172, 173
 Derrida, Jacques (philosopher and literary critic) 322
 Descartes, René (philosopher) 6
 Desmoulin, Camille (journalist) 61
 Devil's Island 172, 173
 Diaghilev, Serge (choreographer) 199
 Diagne, Blaise 216
 Diamond Necklace scandal 7
Diary of a Country Priest (novel) 241
 Diderot, Denis (philosopher) 19–20
 Dienbienphu, battle of 287
 Dimitrieff, Elizabeth (feminist) 145
 Directory 64, 65–70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 77, 79
 Divorce law 59, 180, 260
 Djebbar, Assia (writer) 343
 Djibouti 156, 170
Doctrinaires 85–86
 Doumer, Paul (colonial administrator) 198
 Doumergue, Gaston (president) 230, 244
 Dorgères, Henri (agitator) 243
 Doriot, Jacques (politician) 264
 Drancy 267
 Dreyfus Affair 170, 171, 172–178, 174, 181, 194, 228, 246, 292
 Dreyfus, Alfred (army officer) *see* Dreyfus Affair
 Drieu la Rochelle, Pierre-Eugène (novelist) 251, 264, 287
 Drumont, Edouard (journalist) 165, 171
 Duhamel, Georges (author) 233
 Dumouriez, General Charles (army commander) 55
 Dunkerque 1
 Durand, Marguerite (feminist journalist) 181
 Duras, Claire du 90
 Durkheim, Emile (sociologist) 177, 188
 Duroselle, Jean-Baptiste (historian) 219
 Duruy, Victor (minister of education) 137–138
 Dutch Republic 33
 Éboué, Félix (colonial official) 268, 273
Echo des travailleurs 109
Ecole des cadres of Uriage 259
Ecoles maternelles 182
Ecole Nationale d'Administration 281, 311, 326, 335, 344
Ecole Normale de Sèvres 180
Ecole Normale Supérieure 177
Ecole polytechnique 66
 economy: commerce 16–17, 19, 28, 46, 135, 227, 301; currency 56, 65, 73, 88, 210, 229, 231, 232, 247, 319, 334, 336, 346; depression of 1873–1896, 161–163; depression of 1930s 222, 235, 238–240, 243, 247, 249; effects of railroads on 104–105; European integration and 327, 336, 339–44; in Fifth Republic (1958–1980) 298–300, 326–328, 329, 330, 334, 336, 337, 339; globalization and 340; governmental intervention in 28–29, 126, 280–282, 320–321, 325, 326–327, 336; “Great Recession” and 346; inflation 56, 63, 192, 211, 215, 225, 229, 232, 240, 247, 266, 276, 280, 283, 287, 291, 301, 305, 308, 320, 321, 326, 333; in interwar period (1920s–1930s) 232–233; Marshall Plan and 283; Napoleonic era and 77, 79–80; after 1980, 326–327, 330, 333, 336, 346, 348; post-World-War-II growth of 280–283; pre-1789, 7, 13, 14, 16–17; after Restoration 87, 92; revolutionary price and wage controls and 58; during Second Empire 125–126, 133–134; during early Third Republic 161–163, 190–192; Turgot's plan for liberalization of 30–31; and World War I 210–211; and World War II 261, 266–267
 education 10, 11, 23, 28, 50, 67, 74, 78, 89, 98, 106–107, 112, 114, 120, 122, 128, 135, 137, 138, 145, 148; in French colonies 273;

- establishment of Committee of Public Instruction 46; Falloux school law 122, 137, 153; Ferry Laws 153–154, 158; Guizot school law 112; and May 1968 events 318; in the 1960s 309, 310; reforms of 65–66, 135, 137–138, 237–238, 318, 323, 331; and Third Republic 148–149, 153–154, 158, 230; and Vichy regime 259; *see also* Catholic Church, education and; “Ferry laws” women, education of
- Edward VII (king of England) 201
- Egypt 66–67, 69, 74, 96, 99, 102, 170, 201, 265, 291, 320
- Eiffel, Gustave 185
- Eiffel Tower 44, 185, 186
- Eisenhower, Dwight (Allied military commander) 274
- El Alamein 265
- Elba Island 82
- elections: of 1848, 118–119, 120–121; of 1850, 122; of 1851, 122; of 1852, 124; of 1857, 135; of 1863, 135–136; of 1870, 139; of 1871, 142, 144, 147, 148, 150; of 1885, 163, 177; of 1893, 165; of 1920, 223–224; of 1924, 226, 228, 229, 230; of 1928, 230, 239; of 1936, 244, 250; of 1945, 278; of 1947, 282; of 1956, 291; of 1965, 303; of 1968, 315; of 1969, 316; of 1974, 317–318, 323; of 1978, 323; of 1981, 323, 324–325; of 1983, 327, 328; of 1986, 327, 329; of 1988, 330; of 1992, 331; of 1993, 332; of 1995, 334–335, 336; of 1997, 336; of 2002, 334, 335, 337–339, 341, 343; of 2007, 344–345; of 2012, 346–347; of 2017, 351–353, 352
- Elle* (magazine) 306
- Émigrés 49, 51, 52, 68, 73, 74, 79, 80, 83, 86, 199
- Emile* (novel) 21
- Ems Telegram 139
- Encyclopédia* 19, 20
- End of Eddy, The* (novel) 349
- Enfantin, Prosper (socialist) 95–96
- Enghien, Duc d' (Bourbon prince) 80
- England *see* Great Britain
- English Channel 1
- Enlightenment, French 6, 12, 18–24, 31, 79, 89, 90; diffusion of 18–24; and French institutions 21–22
- entertainment, mass 130
- Essay on the Sciences and the Arts* (Rousseau) 21
- Estates *see* social structure pre-revolutionary
- Estates-General 35–39, 43, 44, 48; *see also* National Assembly
- Esterhazy, Colonel 172, 174; *see also* Dreyfus Affair
- Ethiopia 251
- Etoile Nord-Africaine* 236
- Eugénie (Empress) 128, 135
- Euratom 290
- euro 336, 346, 347
- “Euro-Communism” 323
- European Coal and Steel Community 284
- European Defense Community (EDC) 284, 287, 289
- European Economic Community (EEC) *see* European Union
- European Monetary System (EMS) 319
- European Parliament 319, 327, 328
- European Space Agency 297
- European Union 284, 332, 334, 335, 343, 345–348, 350, 352–354
- évolués 228, 273
- existentialism 288
- The Experimental Novel* (essay) 182
- L'Express* (newsweekly) 302
- Eylau, battle of 77
- Fabius, Laurent (prime minister) 326, 343
- Faisceau* 229
- Falkenhayn, Emil (German general) 207
- Falloux school law 122
- family 7–8
- Fanny* (film) 241
- Fanon, Frantz (anticolonial author) 310
- fascism 241, 244, 282, 309
- Fashoda Crisis 168, 201
- Faubourg Saint-Antoine 39, 43
- Faure, Edgar (politician) 290, 291, 323
- Fauves* 198
- February Revolution of 1848, 115–117, 119, 120, 121; *see also* Provisional Government (1848)
- February 6, 1934, riot of 243, 244; *see also* fascism
- Febvre, Lucien (French historian) 2
- Federalist uprisings 55–57, 72
- Federation of French Socialist Workers 166
- Federal Republic of Germany 283
- Fédérés* 53
- Félibrige* 130
- feminism 59, 95, 96, 112, 117, 121, 179–181, 187, 204, 212, 237–238, 289, 303, 319, 322, 327, 330, 348
- La Femme libre* (journal) 95
- FEN (*Fédération de l'Education Nationale*) 283, 312
- Ferroul, (mayor of Narbonne) 195
- Ferry, Jules (politician) 127, 152–158, 163, 167, 169, 170, 180; and colonial expansion 156–157; fall of 157; *see also* Ferry laws
- Ferry Laws 153–154
- Festival of Federation 44
- Festival of “Saint Napoleon” 130

- Festival of the Supreme Being 61
 Festivals, Napoleonic 78
Fête de la musique 325
 Feuillants 49
Le Feu (by Henri Barbusse) 212
 FFI (French Forces of the Interior) 278; *see also* Gaulle, Charles de; Resistance
 Fifth Republic 334–339, 341–343, 354; constitution of 293–294, 300–301; creation of 140, 293; after de Gaulle 316–318; and decolonization 294–297; under de Gaulle 293–294, 296–304, 314–316; and economic modernization 301–302; and François Mitterrand 324–327, 328, 330; and popular opinion 301; and population policies 305–306; and May 1968 student uprisings 313–315; and social transformation 305–306; and “Thirty Glorious Years” 305
 Fillon, François (prime minister) 345–346, 351
 film industry 233
 “Final Solution” 263
 Finkielkraut, Alain (philosopher) 323
 Finland 254
 Flanders 2
 Flandin, Pierre-Etienne (prime minister) 262
 Flaubert, Gustave (author) 130, 182
Fleurs du Mal (poem) 130
 Fleurus, battle of 61
 Fleury, Cardinal (minister of Louis XV) 31, 32
 FLN (National Liberation Front, in Algeria) 290, 291, 294, 296
 22 floréal Year VI, coup of 68
 Foch, Ferdinand (general) 217, 218, 219, 226
force de frappe 298
 Ford, Henry (American industrialist) 191, 233
 Foucault, Michel (philosopher and historian) 322
 Fouché, Joseph (minister of police) 73, 80, 81, 84, 85
 Fouillé, Madame Augustine (author) 153
 Fouquier-Tinville, Antoine (prosecutor) 63
 Fourastié, Jean (economist) 305
 Fourcade, Marie Madeleine (Resistance leader) 269
 Fourier, Charles (socialist) 96
 Fourmies (1890) 165
 Fourth Republic 276–277, 278–280, 282, 283, 284; and breakdown of colonial empire 284–286, 289–293; constitution of 276–278; creation of 274–278; fall of 292–293
 franc 229–230, 232, 283
La France Juive (book) 171
 Francistes 243
 “Françafrique” 296
 Franco, Francisco (Spanish dictator) 248
 Franco-Prussian War 139, 169
 Franco-Russian Treaty (1894) 168–169, 205
 Franz Joseph (Austrian emperor) 132
 Frayssinous, Denis (bishop) 89
 Frederic II (king of Prussia) 31
 free people of color (in French colonies) 52–60
 Free French Movement 268, 271, 272; *see also* Gaulle, Charles De; Resistance
 Freemasonry 22, 135, 171, 263
 Frenay, Henry (Resistance leader) 269
 French and Indian War *see* Seven Years’ War
 “French Community” 295, 297
 French Congo 202
 French Equatorial Africa 268, 273
 French Forces of the Interior *see* FFI
 French Foreign Legion 285
 French Guyana 337
 French League for Women’s Rights 180
 French Polynesia 297
 French Revolution *see* Revolution of 1789
 French Second Armored Division 274
 “French Union” 284–285, 294
 French West Africa 228, 268
 Freud, Sigmund (psychoanalyst) 188, 305
 Freycinet Plan 155, 162
 Friedland, battle of 77
Fronde, La (journal) 181
Front National (FN) 270, 291, 328, 329, 330, 332, 333, 334, 337, 338, 339, 343, 344, 345, 347, 350, 351, 354; *see also* Le Pen, Jean-Marie; Le Pen, Marine; *Rassemblement national*
 18 fructidor Year V, coup of 68
 Fulbright program 307
 Fund for Modernization and Investment 283
 “Funeral at Ornans” (painting) 130
 Furet, François (historian) 333
 Gallicanism 29
 Gallieni, General 206
 Gallifet, General 175
 Gallimard, Gaston (publisher) 199
 Gambetta, Léon (republican leader) 135, 140, 141–142, 146, 147, 148–150, 152, 155, 156, 157, 161
 Gamelin, General Maurice (French general) 255
La Garçonne (novel) 235–236
 Garibaldi, Giuseppe (Italian nationalist) 132
 Garnier, Charles (architect) 140
 Garonne River 2
 Garvey, Marcus (American activist) 236
 Gauguin, Paul (artist) 183
 Gaul 1
 Gaulle, Charles de 140, 252, 276, 279, 282, 284, 289; and Algerian War 292–293, 294–297; and constitutional reform 293–294, 300–301, 316; and domestic

- politics 302–304; and Fifth Republic 292–304; final years 313–316; and Fourth Republic 274–275, 276; personal characteristics 268–269; and Provisional Government in World War II 274–275, 277–278, 285; return to power (1958) 292–294; during World War II 256, 267–275; youth 268
- Gaulle, Josephine de (author) 184
- Gautier, Théophile (writer) 97
- Gazette des Femmes* 96
- General Maximum Law 58
- General Study Committee 272
- Genet, Edmond (French diplomat) 55
- Geneva 2, 289
- Genius of Christianity* (book) 79
- German Democratic Republic 284
- German empire, creation of 140, 147
- German Social Democrats 204
- Germany: Boulanger affair and 164; buildup to World War I 169–170, 201–203; comparisons with France 159, 165, 167, 179, 181, 192, 237, 243; economic growth of 163; after Franco-Prussian War 140, 169; French intervention in (1920s) 225–226, 248; French invasion of (1790s) 66; invasion of France (1940) 255–256; during interwar period 223, 232, 239; Napoleon I and 74, 77; relations with during the Second Empire 138, 139–140; rise of Hitler and Nazism 239, 243, 248–250; Thiers and 100; Vichy collaboration with 261–264; during World War I 204–211, 212–213, 215; during World War II 249–254, 255–265, 266–275; after World War II 276–277, 283–284, 299
- Germinal* (novel) 162, 182
- Gestapo 272
- Ghana 295
- Gide, André (novelist) 199, 236
- Giono, Jean (novelist) 241
- Girardin, Emile (newspaper publisher) 111–112
- Giraud, General Henri (army officer) 272
- Giraudoux, Jean (playwright) 241
- Girondins 54–56
- Giroud, Françoise (journalist) 319
- Giscard d'Estaing, Valéry (French president) 304, 316, 318–321, 323, 324, 325, 326, 333, 335
- globalization 339–340, 355
- Glucksmann, André (philosopher) 323
- Godard, Jean-Luc (filmmaker) 310
- Gold rush, Californian 126
- Goncharova, Natalie (artist) 198
- Gouges, Olympe de (revolutionary) 59
- Government of National Defense 141
- Grand Alliance 278
- Grand Army 76
- Le Grand Meaulnes* (novel) 199
- Grasse, Admiral de 33
- Great Britain: climate of 3; Common Market application vetoed by de Gaulle 299, 316; comparisons with France 102, 103, 149, 151, 159, 232–233; economic relations with 319, 327; Fashoda Crisis and 170, 201; formation of Entente with 201–202; industrialization and 102–105, 159, 163, 192; during interwar period 237, 238; during reign of Napoleon I 66, 75–77, 81; before Revolution of 1789, 27, 32–33; during Revolution of 1789 55; Seven Years' War and 32–33; during World War I 201, 202, 203, 206, 210, 213, 217, 218–219; after World War II 291, 299; during World War II 252, 256, 257, 262, 266, 274; *see also* “Brexit”; Churchill, Winston; Fashoda crisis; London; Thatcher, Margaret; World War I; World War II
- “Great Fear” 39
- “Green Party” 336
- “Great Recession” (2008) 347
- Grenoble 191, 274
- Greuze, Jean-Baptiste (painter) 7
- Grévy, Jules (politician) 151, 164
- Guadeloupe 32, 75, 118, 156, 162, 264, 285, 297, 346
- Guderian, General Heinz 255
- Guernica* (painting) 250
- Guesde, Jules (socialist) 165–166, 175, 177, 180, 193, 204
- Guilds 9–10, 16, 30, 34; abolition of 46
- Guilley, Christophe (author) 348
- Guillotin, Dr. (legislator) 54
- Guillotine 54, 55, 61, 63
- Guizot, François (prime minister) 90, 91, 98–100, 102, 105, 111, 112, 113, 115, 116, 168
- Gulag Archipelago, The* (book) 321
- Hadj, Messali (Algerian activist) 236, 248, 273, 290
- Haiti *see* Saint-Domingue
- Halles, Les* 127
- Ham, fortress of 124
- Hamon, Benoît (politician) 351
- Harlem Renaissance 236
- Harmel, Léon (industrialist) 168
- Haussmann, Georges (prefect of Paris) 126–127, 143, 184
- Hébert, J.-R. (journalist) 64
- Hélias, Pierre Jakez (writer) 159
- Helvetic Republic *see* Switzerland
- Hemingway, Ernest (writer) 235
- Henriot, Philippe 272
- Henry, IV (king of France) 25
- Henry V *see* Chambord, Comte de

- Henry, Captain Hubert 173; *see also* Dreyfus Affair
Hernani (play) 97, 199
 Herriot, Edouard (politician) 226, 229, 230, 240
 Hervé, Gustave (labor militant) 194
 Herzl, Theodor (Zionist leader) 172
 Hessel, Stéphane (author) 348
 "Hexagon, the" 1–3
 historical memory: and deportation monument 307; of Algerian War 342–343; of Napoleon I 130; of Resistance 307; of slavery 342; of Vichy 342; of World War I 234; of World War II 322
History of the French Revolution (by Thiers) 89
History of the Two Indies 20
 Hitler, Adolf (German dictator) 140, 194, 227, 239, 243, 244, 245, 248–252, 255, 256, 257, 259, 260, 262, 263, 264, 265, 270, 275, 276, 279
 Hoare-Laval Pact 251
 Ho Chi Minh (Vietnamese leader) 284, 285, 289
 Hocquenghem, Guy (gay militant) 322
 Hoffman, Stanley (political scientist) 152
 Hohenlinden, battle of 74
 Hollande, François (French president) 344, 347–350, 351, 353
 Holy Roman Empire 75
L'Homme enchaîné (newspaper) 209
L'Homme libre 209
 homosexuals 263, 306, 322
Horse of Pride, The (book) 159
 horses (in French economy) 105
 Hôtel de Ville 42, 140
 Houphouët-Boigny, Félix (African politician) 294
 Hugo, Victor (author) 89, 90, 97, 99, 123, 125, 155, 185, 199
 Huguenots 4
L'Humanité (newspaper) 224
 Hundred Years War 5
 Hutus, and Rwandan genocide 332–333
 Huysmans, J.K. (novelist) 188
 "hypermarchés" 301
 Icarian movement 112
Idéologues 66
 immigration 3–4; recent 294, 327–328, 333, 336, 338, 341, 345, 346, 347; after World War I 222, 234–235; before World War I 188, 192–193
 Imperial Catechism 78
 Imperial University 78
 Imperialism *see* Colonial Empire
 impressionism 182–183
 India, French possessions in 3, 34
Indigénat law 157, 235, 273, 285
Indinez-vous! (by Stéphane Hessel) 348
 Indochina 131, 156, 197, 198, 210, 216, 227, 264, 268, 284–286, 289–291; French surrender of 289; protectorate established 156; war in 284–286, 289–290, 291; *see also* Vietnam
 industry 13, 16–17, 27, 77, 88, 102–107, 126, 128, 138; automobiles 190–191, 233, 239, 306, 308, 320; beginnings of industrialization 102–107; Continental System 77; and *comités d'organisation* 260–261; during German occupation 266–267; and Fifth Republic 301–302; France's lag in 88, 102–105, 191; modernization after World War II 280–282; opposition to 166; post-World War I growth of 234–235; problems in 161–162, 239, 320–321; textile manufacturing 16, 88, 94, 102, 107, 109, 138, 162, 165, 166, 190, 192; and women 192, 210; and World War I 209–211, 219; *see also* economy; labor movement; tariff policy
 Information and Press Bureau 271
L'Ingénue (novel) 19
 inheritance laws 59, 87, 108
Institut de France 66
Institut des Études politiques 335
 intellectuals 240–241, 287–289, 306–307, 309–310, 321–323
 International Congress on the Rights of Women (1878) 185
 International Exposition (London 1862) 134
 International Steel Agreement 226
 International Working Men's Association 134, 143
 Internet 340–341
 Invalides 114
 Iran 321, 350, 353
 Iraq 262, 334, 339, 345, 349
 Ireland 115, 316
 Irigaray, Luce (feminist philosopher) 322
 Islamic State 349
 Israel 291, 300, 320, 341
 Italy 1, 66, 72, 74, 77, 82, 86, 93, 131, 135, 156, 169, 222, 235, 243, 244, 249, 251, 274, 282, 284, 353; French support for unification of 132; French agreement with (1902) 169; during World War II 251, 274
 "J'accuse" (by Emile Zola) 173; *see also* Dreyfus Affair
 Jackson, Julian (historian) 261
 Jacobin Clubs 43, 49, 55, 63; *see also* Revolution of 1789
 Jacobinism 71
 Jansenism 18–19, 27, 29

- Japan 183, 202, 264, 284, 301, 340
 Jarry, Alfred (playwright) 184
 Jaurès, Jean (socialist) 175, 177–178, 193, 202, 204, 224, 246; *see also Bloc républicain*; Dreyfus Affair; pacifism; socialism
 Jefferson, Thomas 35, 55
 Jena, battle of 77
 Jesuit Order 29, 167
Jeunesse agricole catholique 308
Jeunesse dorée 63, 64
Jeunesses patriotes 229
 Jews 3, 74, 83, 105, 112, 113, 122, 135, 146, 155, 158, 241, 244, 246, 249, 349, 354; *Action française* and 173, 194, 195; citizenship granted to 46, 48, 74, 146, 172; Dreyfus Affair and 171–172, 174; expulsion of (1307) 4; immigration to France 192, 249; persecution during World War II 256, 260, 263–265, 267, 272; Vichy regime and 260, 263–265, 267, 269, 270, 272, 332, 342; *see also* anti-semitism, Dreyfus affair
 “The Jewish State” (pamphlet) 172
 Joan of Arc 5, 237
 Joffre, Joseph (general) 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 213, 256
 John XXIII (pope) 308
 Josephine, Empress 69, 72, 76, 79, 80
 Jospin, Lionel (prime minister) 331, 335–339, 340, 344
 Jouhaux, Léon (trade union leader) 224
 Joyce, James (writer) 235
 Juarez, Benito (Mexican republican) 138
 July Monarchy 92–100, 103, 105, 108, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 125, 137, 158; collapse of 115–121; constitution of 97; *see also* Guizot, François; Louis-Philippe; Revolution of 1830; Thiers, Adolphe
 July Ordinances (1830) 90–91, 93
 July Revolution *see* Revolution of 1830
 June Days (1848) 119–121, 147; *see also* Revolution of 1848
 Juppé, Alain (prime minister) 335–336, 345, 351
 Jura Mountains 2
 Kellogg-Briand Treaty 226
 Kergomard, Pauline (school reformer) 182
 Khmer Rouge 323
 Khrushchev, Nikita (Soviet premier) 292
 Kluck, von (German general) 206
 Korean War 284
 Kouchner, Bernard (politician) 345
 Kourou 297
 Kristeva, Julia (feminist philosopher) 322
Là-Bas (novel) 188
 Labor Charter 261
 labor movement 143, 166, 194, 210, 215, 225, 245, 249, 312; and Clemenceau 195, 196, 224; divisions in 194, 225, 312; and Jean Jaurès 175, 177, 202; and 1968 revolt 300; and Paris Commune 143–145, 160; and Popular Front 235, 245–247, 249–250, 281, 317, 366; post-World War I unrest 225, 245–246, 249; and Second Empire 128, 159; and socialism 113, 117, 119, 128–129, 149, 165–167, 177, 193; trade unions 165–166, 281; and World War I 210, 214–215; and Vichy regime 277, 260; *see also* Bourses de travail; CFDT; CFTC; CGT; CGTU; Force ouvrière; strikes; working class
 Lacan, Jacques (psychoanalyst) 322
laïcité 153, 330, 350, 354
 Lamarque, General 99
 Lamartine, Alphonse, de (poet and politician) 90, 116
 Lamennais, Félicité de (theologian) 96
 Lang, Jack (politician) 325
 languages, regional 3–4, 6, 59
 Languedoc 3, 4, 27, 195
La Lanterne (journal) 138
 Laos *see* Indochina
 Laroque, Pierre (politician) 281
 Laval, Pierre (politician) 251, 281; *see also* Collaborationism; Pétain, Marshall Philippe; Vichy regime
 Lavigerie, Cardinal (archbishop of Algiers) 167
 Law of Suspects (1794) 58, 63
 Lazare, Bernard (journalist) 172
 Le Bon, Gustave (sociologist) 188
 Le Chapelier Law (1791) 46, 109, 134
 Le Creusot 144
 League for the Defense of the Rights of Man 173
 League of Augsburg, War of 31
 League of Nations 219–220, 226
 Lebanon 2, 220, 248, 253, 273
 Lecanuet, Jean (politician) 303
 Ledru-Rollin (minister) 117–118, 121–122
 Lefebvre, Marcel (French bishop) 308
 Legion of Honor 74
 Legislative Assembly (1791–1792) 51–54; and decision for war 52–55, suspension of Louis XVI by 52, 54
 Legitimists 93, 119, 123–124, 140, 142, 147–148
 Legrand, Victor (civil engineer) 103–104
 Leipzig, battle of 81
 Le Pen, Jean-Marie (Front National leader) 291, 328–329, 338–339, 341, 343
 Le Pen, Marine (politician) 347, 351–354

- Lettres de cachet* 7
Levée en masse 58
Lévi-Strauss, Claude (anthropologist) 309
Liberal Empire 138–139, 148
liberalism 83, 85, 97–98, 131, 154, 167–168, 178, 241, 318, 321
Libération (resistance group) 261, 269–270, 290, 305, 307, 317, 368
Liberation of France 266, 271, 273–278, 280, 282–283, 287–290, 305, 311, 321
Libération-Nord 270
“Liberty Leading the People” (painting) 92
Life of Jesus (essay) 136
Ligue de la Patrie française 173
Ligue des patriotes 16165
Lille 2, 53, 102, 107–109
Limoges 119, 126
Limousin 9, 47
Littré, Emile (linguist) 136–137
Lloyd George, David (British prime minister) 219–220
Locarno Pact 226
Loire River 60, 142
Lois scélérates 166
Lombardy 132
Lomé Agreements 320
London 2, 139, 150, 201–202, 267–268, 270, 274
Lorraine 2, 47, 157, 163, 170, 203, 205, 206, 214, 229; annexed to Germany (1871) 147, 156, 169; industrialization in 162, 191, 321; restored to France (1918) 219–220; under German occupation (1940–1944) 257, 262, 267
Loubet, Emile (French president) 175
Louis VIII (king of France) 4
Louis XIV (king of France) 4–6, 14, 18, 25–27, 31, 33–34
Louis XV (king of France) 18, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32–33, 36, 183, 358
Louis XVI (king of France) 27, 31, 34–35, 37–38, 42, 45, 48, 52–54, 83, 91; accession to throne 30, 33; attitude toward Revolution of 1789 45, 47; coronation of 30, 33; execution of 55, 84; flight of 48–50, 52; resistance to National Assembly 38, 42, 45, 47, 48–49, 50, 52
Louis XVIII (King of France) 83–85, 88, 93; *see also* Bourbon Restoration
Louis-Napoleon 119–126, 128, 163; *see also* Napoleon III
Louis-Philippe (Duc d’Orléans and king of France) 93, 98–100, 102, 105, 113, 115–116, 118; *see also* July Monarchy; Revolution of 1830
Louis, Eddy (author) 349
Louisiana 75
Louisiana Purchase 75
Lourdes 112, 137
Louverture, Toussaint (military commander) 60, 67, 75, 361
Louvre museum 326, 333
Ludendorff (German commander) 217–218
Lumière brothers (filmmakers) 185, 190
Lunéville, Treaty of 75
Luxembourg 2, 75, 117, 138, 255, 284
Luxembourg Commission (1848) 117
Lyautey, Hubert (Moroccan governor) 197
lycées 106, 309; *see also* Education
Lyon: industry in 16, 162, 190–191 insurrection in (1831, 1848) 94, 99, 117, 122; labor movement and 109–111, 166; during Paris Commune 141, 144; during Revolution of 1789, 57, 63
Macé, Jean (educator) 148
MacMahon, Marshall Patrice de 139, 147–151, 164
Macron, Emmanuel (French president) 348, 351, 352 (image) 353
Madagascar 156, 197, 253, 264, 285
Madame Bovary (novel) 130, 363
Magenta, battle of 132
Maggiolo survey 22
Maginot Line 252, 254
Main d’Oeuvre Immigré (MOI) 270
Mallarmé, Stéphane (poet) 188
Malraux, André (novelist) 241, 307
Malta 156
Manche *see* English Channel
Manet, Edouard (artist) 135, 136
“Manif pour tous” (2013) 348, 351
“Manifesto of the Sixty” (1864) 134
Man’s Fate (novel) 241
Man’s Hope (novel) 241
Mao Zhe-Dong (Chinese leader) 310, 313
Maquis 272, 274; *see also* Resistance
Marais 191, 317
Marat, Jean-Paul (journalist) 55–56
Marchais, Georges (Communist leader) 317, 323
Marchand, Captain 170
Marengo, battle of 74
Margueritte, Victor (novelist) 236
“Marianne” (female effigy) 148, 155
Marie-Antoinette (Queen of France) 8, 28, 33, 45, 90
Marie-Claire (magazine) 306
Marie-Louise (empress) 80
Marius (film) 241
Marne, battle of 206, 208–209, 256
marriage patterns *see* family
Marseille 2, 53, 55–56, 63, 119, 141, 144, 160
Marseillaise 245, 318, 341

- Marshall, George (American secretary of state) 283
 Marshall Plan 283
 Martignac, Vicomte de (prime minister) 87, 90
 Martinique 32, 118, 156, 162, 236, 285, 297
 Marx, Karl (philosopher) 117, 129, 134, 143, 145, 166, 177
 Marxism 240, 288, 292, 309–310
Massif Central 2, 15, 121, 162, 270, 275, 291
 Massu, General 296
 Mathilde (princess) 130
 Matignon Accords 247
 Matisse, Henri (artist) 198, 236
 Maupassant, Guy de (writer) 182
 Maupeou, René (minister) 32, 33
 Maupeou “coup” 29–32
 Mauriac, François (novelist) 308
 Mauroy, Pierre (prime minister) 325–326
 Maurras, Charles (political writer) 194, 237, 263
 Maury, abbé (counter-revolutionary spokesman) 44
 Maximilian, Archduke 138
maximum 58, 63
 May 1968 student uprising 313–315, 314
 May 16, 1877, “coup” of 150; *see also* MacMahon, Marshall
 Mazarin, Cardinal (advisor to Louis XIV) 26
 McDonald’s 339, 340
 “Me Too” movement 354
Médecins sans frontières (Doctors without Borders) 340
Mediapart web site 348
 Mediterranean Sea 19
 Mélenchon, Jean-Luc (politician) 347, 351
 Mélina, Jules 162, 165
 Mélina Tariff 168
 Mendès-France, Pierre (politician) 280, 289–291, 293, 300, 315, 369
 Ménétra, Jacques-Louis (artisan) 9
menhirs 3
 Merkel, Angela (German prime minister) 346, 350, 353
 Messmer, Pierre (prime minister) 317
 métro 15, 190
 Metz 139, 142
 Mexico 138
 Michel, Louise (revolutionary) 145
 Michelin tire company 190, 233
 Michelet, Jules (historian) 111, 115
 middle classes 43, 93, 98, 106, 107, 151, 157, 160, 193, 311; *see also* bourgeoisie
Midi 124, 177, 192
Migrants en bas de chez soi (by Isabelle Coutant) 350
 Milan 132
 Milhaud, Darius (composer) 236
Milice 272, 277, 332; *see also* Collaborationism
 Military *see* Army
 Millau 339
 Millerand, Alexander (politician): as first Socialist cabinet minister 175, 178, 193; as president of France 224, 225
 Millaud, Polydore (newspaper editor) 129
 Minitel network 340
 Ministry of Culture 307, 325
 Ministry of Finance 333
 Ministry of Industrial Production 261
 Ministry of Labor, creation of 196
 Ministry for Women’s Rights 325
 Mirabeau, Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, Comte de (revolutionary leader) 38, 44
 Mirage III 298
Mirari vos 97
Mission civilisatrice 157, 197
 Mistral, Frédéric (poet) 130
 Mitterrand, François (president): career before 1981, 293, 300, 302–304, 317, 321; and decentralization 325; election and presidency 324–336, 343; “u-turn” in policies 326–328
 Mokrani, Mohammed el (Algerian chief) 146, 155
 Mollet, Guy (SFIO leader) 291
 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact 252
monarchiens 45
 monarchy, pre-revolutionary: centralization of power by 4–6; challenges to 19, 22, 25–28, 30–31, 53; debt incurred by 28, 30, 33; and foreign relations 31–33; “limits to absolutism” 34, 37; restoration of (1814) 80–91, 92; rise of absolutism 14; unifying influence of 6–7
 Monet, Claude (artist) 135, 136, 183; *see also* Impressionism
Monde, Le (newspaper) 284, 287, 331, 339, 349
 Monfalcon, Jean-Baptiste (author) 106
 Monnet, Jean (planning expert) 252, 280, 282
 Mont Blanc 2
Montagnards 54–57, 59, 61, 63; *see also* Jacobins
 Montaigne, Michel de (essayist) 6
 Montalembert, Charles (liberal Catholic leader) 112
 Montcalm, Madame de (salon hostess) 85
 Montesquieu, Baron de (political theorist) 19, 21
 Montoire conference 262
 Montmartre 148, 163, 184
 “Moral Order” government (1873–1877) 148–149, 155, 180
 Moréas, Jean (symbolist) 188
 Moreau, Victor (general) 74
 Morocco 197, 201–202, 228, 230, 236, 253, 257, 265, 290, 295, 311

- Morny, Auguste, Duc de (Bonapartist) 136
 Moscow 81, 224–225, 230, 244,
 278, 366
 Moulin, Jean (Resistance leader) 270–272
 Mounier, Emmanuel (intellectual) 240–240
“Mouvement pour la libération des femmes”
 322
 MRP (*Mouvement Républicain Populaire*) 277,
 280, 282
 Mulhouse 102–104, 109
 Mun, Albert de (politician) 168, 204
 Munich Agreement 251
 Museum of Man 269
 Museum of Natural History 65
 Muslims 100, 155, 297, 341, 349–350,
 354, 365
 Mussolini, Benito (Italian fascist leader) 140,
 243, 251
- Nanterre, University of 333
 Nantes 17, 60, 119
 Naples, Kingdom of 66, 132
 Napoleon I (emperor) 1, 33, 58, 64, 66, 88, 95,
 100, 105, 106, 125, 151, 205, 314, 144;
 accomplishments of 71–83, 85; alliance with
 Alexander I 77; and Concordat of 1801 75,
 76, 79–80, 88; consolidation of power
 73–75; Continental System 77, 81; crowned
 emperor 76; early career 64, 69–72; Egyptian
 campaign 66, 69, 74; escape from Elba 84;
 fall of 82–83, 87; and foreign relations 76,
 77–78, 81–82; and higher education 79;
 Hundred Days 84–86; and Italian campaign
 of 1796 67, 72; and memory of 89, 90,
 93, 113, 114, 130; as military leader
 67–68, 76, 78, 82–83; named Consul
 for Life 75; opposition to 79–81;
 policies as First Consul 71–73, 75; Russian
 campaign 81–82; seizure of power (*brumaire*
 coup) 69, 71–72, 74; and streamlining
 of government 73–75; suppression of
 dissent by 75, 79
 Napoleon III (emperor) 125–140, 162, 164;
 economic policy 126–127, 162; elected to
 presidency 124–125; fall of 139; and foreign
 affairs 130–132, 138–140, 285; legacy of 140
 Napoleonic settlement 73–74, 81, 85
 Narbonne 195
 Nasser, Gamal Abdel (Egyptian leader) 291
 National Assembly 342, 344, 347
 1789–1791 38–49, 51–57, 59, 65; *see also*
Assignats; Declaration of Rights; Civil
 Constitution of the Clergy
 1870–1875 143, 147, 149, 150–151, 153
 Fourth Republic 291–292, 293
 National Convention (1793–1795) 53–54, 60,
 75; *see also* Jacobins; Robespierre; Terror
- National Guard (1790s) 42, 44, 49, 56; (1848)
 116, 119; (1870–71) 141–143
 National Library 333
 National Resistance Council 272–273
 “National Revolution” 259, 260, 261; *see also*
 Vichy regime
 National Workshops 117, 119
 Nationalism 32, 59, 63, 71, 131, 164, 165, 188,
 199, 202, 299; and French colonies 228
 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)
 284, 289, 299, 325
 naturalism, in literature 182, 199
 Nazism 222
Nausea (novel) 288
 Necker, Jacques (politician) 23, 30–31, 33,
 36–37, 39, 66
Négritude movement 236
 Nelson, Horatio (English admiral) 67, 76
 Nemirovsky, Irène (novelist) 256
 Nerval, Gérard de (poet) 97
 Netherlands 31, 66, 75, 77, 284
 New Caledonia 131, 297, 330
 “New Christianity” 95
 “New Order” 264
 newspapers 22, 38, 90, 106, 111–112, 114,
 135, 142, 235, 270, 284, 329; censorship of
 43, 99, 120, 147, 177, 208, 277, 287; in
 Resistance 270; in Revolution of 1789 43;
 mass press 117
 Newton, Isaac (scientist) 19
 New York 155, 241, 339
 Ney, General (military commander) 84
 Nice 1, 132, 349
 Nietzsche, Friedrich (philosopher) 199
 Nivelle, Robert (general) 213
 Nobility 6, 10–11, 13, 26, 36, 39, 78, 83,
 105, 158
noblesse de la robe 11
Nord, department of 162, 165, 166, 176, 195,
 206, 262, 321
 Normandy 15, 118, 274, 275
 Normans 3, 4
 North German Confederation 138
 North Sea 2
 Notre Dame cathedral, burning of (2019) 355
Nouveau roman 309
Nouveaux philosophes 323
Nouvelle Revue Française, (journal) 199
Nouvelle Héloïse, La (novel) 21
 nuclear energy 290, 320
 nuclear weapons 298–299
- OAS *see* Secret Army Organization
 Obama, Barack (American president) 350, 353
 October 17, 1961, demonstration of 296
 “October Days” (1789) 42–44
 Offenbach, Jacques (composer) 129

- Ollivier, Emile (politician) 138, 139
 “Olympia” (painting) 136
On the Household System (book) 238
On Violence (by Georges Sorel) 194
 Operation Anvil-Dragoon 275
 Operation Attila 265
 Operation Overlord 274
 Opportunist Republicans 152, 155, 163
 Oradour 274, 307
Organisation internationale de la Francophonie 341
The Organization of Labor 113
 Orléanists 119, 123, 125, 142,
 147–149; *see also* July Monarchy; Thiers,
 Aldophe
 Orléans 105, 125
 Orsini, Felice (Italian nationalist) 132
 Ottoman Empire 99, 131, 220
Ourika 90
- Pacific, French colonies in 100, 131, 183, 297;
 see also New Caledonia; Tahiti
 pacifism 168, 202, 241
 Pagnol, Marcel (filmmaker) 241
 Painlevé, Paul (prime minister) 214, 216
 Palestine 131
 Palikao, General (prime minister) 139
 Panama Scandal (1893) 165
 Papal States 77, 131, 132
 Papon, Maurice 296
 Paris 296, 299, 305, 309, 310, 324, 341, 343,
 34–350; as capital of France 1, 5–6, 318;
 during Chirac presidency 329, 334, 335, 337,
 344; as cultural and intellectual center 61, 67,
 126–128, 136, 172, 185, 192, 199, 235, 285,
 325, 333; during Franco-Prussian War
 140–142, 169; and ethnic tension 329–331,
 341, 343; geographical significance, of 1–4,
 104–105, 217; growth of 6, 109, 127, 234,
 307, 317; industry in 77; liberation of 274,
 276–277; modernization under Pompidou
 317; during Mitterand presidency 329–331,
 333; during Paris Commune 141–148;
 rebuilding of in Second Empire 124,
 126–128, 131–132; during Revolution of
 1789 37, 39–44, 49, 53–56, 58, 60–61;
 during Revolution of 1848 112, 114–120,
 122–124; during World War I 204, 206, 209;
 during World War II 256, 258–264, 267,
 269, 270, 272, 274–276
 Paris climate accord 349–350
 Paris Commune uprising (1870–71) 141–144,
 160, 163
 Paris, Comte de (royalist pretender) 147
 Paris International Exposition (1900)
 190; *see also* World’s Fairs
 Paris, University of 4
- Parlement* of Paris 7, 29–30
Parlements 11, 27, 29–30; *see also* Maupeou
Paroles d’un croyant (book) 97
Parti du Peuple algérien 248
Parti Ouvrier Français 165
Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire 166
Parti Social Française 249
Parti Socialiste 315–316, 332–336, 343–347;
 see also Mitterrand, François
 “Party of Order” 119–122, 141
 Pascal, Blaise (philosopher) 6
 Pasteur, Louis (biologist) 137
 Paul, Tsar (Russian ruler) 68
 Paul VI, pope 308
 PCF *see* Communist Party
 Pearl Harbor 264
 peasants: continued traditionalism of 87, 192,
 233; economic status after Restoration 88;
 impact of industrialization 94, 103–104; and
 Napoleon 78, 81, 82;
 pre-revolutionary conditions 7–16, 24, 37;
 and Revolution of 1789 39, 41, 56, 59,
 64, 107–108, 179; during Second Empire
 129, 140; and socialism 176, 193, 229;
 during Third Republic 151, 158, 160, 238;
 and urban migration 158–159; and universal
 suffrage 116, 118, 123, 142; during World
 War I 214–215; during World War II 266
 Peasant Defense Committee 243
 Pégy, Charles (essayist) 202
 Pelletier, Madeleine 237
 Perec, Georges (novelist) 308
Père Duchêne (pamphlet-journal) 61
Perfect Nanny, The (by Leila Slimani) 349
 Périer, Casimir (prime minister) 91, 95
 Pereire brothers 126, 134
Persian Letters (essay) 19
 Pétain, Marshall Philippe (French general and
 politician) 217, 225, 252, 255–256, 275,
 277, 300; collaboration with Germans
 261–263, 273, 275; commander at Verdun
 208, 213; establishment of Vichy regime
 257–260; 1917 army mutinies 213; relations
 with de Gaulle 251, 268–269; trial of
 277; *see also* collaborationism; Vichy regime
Petit Journal (newspaper) 129
Petit Parisien (newspaper) 169
 Peugeot (auto manufacturer) 210
Peuple, Le (book) 111
 Pfimlin, Pierre (prime minister) 292
phalansteries 96
 Philipon, Charles (satirist) 93–94
 Philippe, Edouard (politician) 353
 philosophes 19–23, 32, 93 323; opponents of 21
 “Phony War” (1939–1940) 254–255
phyllloxera 161–162, 195
 Physiocrats 28, 30

- Picasso, Pablo (artist) 198–199, 236
 “Picnic on the Grass” (painting) 136
 Picquart, Colonel Georges (army officer) 172
 Piedmont 72, 131, 132
pied-noirs *see* Algerian war
 Piketty, Thomas (economist) 348
 Pinay, Antoine (minister) 287
 Pineau, Christian (Resistance leader) 270–271
 Pireaud, Paul (soldier) 208
 Pissarro, Camille (artist) 136, 183
 Pius VII, Pope 74, 77, 80
 Pius IX, Pope 137, 167
 Pius XI, Pope 229
 Pius, XII, Pope 308
 Place de la Bastille 333
Plague, The (novel) 288
 “Plan XVII” (1914) 205
 Pletzl (Paris Jewish neighborhood) 192
 Pleven, René (prime minister) 284
 Plombières, conference of 132
 Poincaré, Raymond (political leader) 196, 203, 217, 224–225, 228–230, 232, 239; and World War I 203–204; financial policies of 228–230, 232, 239; occupation of the Ruhr by 224–225
 Poland 2, 33, 77, 93, 119, 207, 222, 353; under Communist rule 320; immigration from 222; in World War II 251–252, 255
 Polignac, Jules de (prime minister) 90; *see also* Revolution of 1830
 political clubs 43, 118, 120, 145; *see also* Jacobin clubs
 Pompadour, Madame de 28
 Pompidou, Georges (prime minister and president) 302–303, 314–319, 326, 332
 popular culture 6, 23–24
 Popular Front (1936–1938) 235, 243–252, 259, 261, 273, 276, 317; and colonial policy 248
 popular opinion: of appeasement 250, 262; of de Gaulle 298; in Old Regime 20, 23, 32–33, 44–45, 48, 52, 55; of surrender in World War II 254–255, 277, 278; of World War I 209
 population 109; birth rate debates 87, 159, 162, 181, 192, 233; diversity of in France 3–4, 7, 130, 197, 244, 263, 286, 291–294, 296–297, 312, 328–330, 334, 341, 350, 355; effects of World War I 214, 222, 237–238, 248; growth before 1789 5–6, 13–15; post-World War II boom in 305–306, 309; *see also* birth control
 Portugal 80
 Positivism 136–137, 152
Possibilistes 166
 Potonié-Pierre, Eugénie (feminist) 181
 Potsdam Conference 278
 Poujade, Pierre (politician) 291
 Poulenc, François (composer) 236
 Poulot, Denis (manufacturer) 129, 159–160
précarité 348
La Presse (newspaper) 111
 primogeniture 76
 Progressists 165
 Protestants 4, 26, 48, 83, 103, 122, 135, 171, 269
 citizenship granted to 46
 Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph (socialist) 113, 128–129, 143, 166, 180
 Proust, Marcel (writer) 236
 Provencal (language) 130
 Provence 3, 4, 15, 24, 40, 107, 123, 241
 Provisional Government (1848) 116–118, 121, 146; (1944–46) 272–273, 275–278, 280–281, 284–285, 294
 Prud’hon, Pierre-Paul (artist) 79
 Prussia 32–33, 52, 66, 77, 81, 139, 147, 206
 PSU (Unified Socialist Party) 312, 330
 Public festivals, in Revolution of 1789 61, 78
 Putin, Vladimir (Russian president) 350
 Pyrénées 1, 2, 5, 81
 Qaddafi, Muammar (Libyan dictator) 343
 Quai Branly, Musée de 342
 “Quasi-War” 67
 Québec 32, 300; *see also* Canada, French
 Quesnay, François (economic theorist) 15
 RPF (*Rassemblement du Peuple Français*) 282, 284, 292; *see also* Gaulle, Charles de
 Rabelais, François 6
 Radical Party 193, 237, 240; and Popular Front 243, 247
 radio 233, 256, 257, 267, 268, 274, 290, 315, 318, 326, 329
Radio Bœuf 329
 Raffarin, Jean-Pierre (prime minister) 343
 railroads 103–106, 104, 126–127, 158, 187, 194, 198, 247, 246
Ralliement 167–168; *see also* Catholic Church
 Ramadier, Paul (prime minister) 282
 Raspail, François (socialist) 121
Rassemblement national 354; *see also* Front National
Rassemblement populaire *see* Popular Front
 Raynal, abbé (philosopher) 20
 Reagan, Ronald (United States President) 325
The Red and the Black (novel) 97
 Reign of Terror *see* Terror
 Reims 86, 223
 Renan, Ernest (philosopher) 136–137, 155
 Renault (auto manufacturer) 190, 210, 235, 277, 282, 340
René (novel) 79
 Renoir, Auguste (artist) 183

- reparations 211, 219–220, 225, 227; *see also* Versailles Treaty
- Republican Defense Coalition, breakup of 193
- République en Marche, La* 351; *see also* Macron, Emmanuel
- Resistance in World War II 254, 255–256, 259, 275–276, 264–267, 269–275, 277–294, 292; *see also* De Gaulle; Free French Movement; Frenay, Henry
- Restoration *see* Bourbon Restoration
- Réunion 131, 285, 297
- revenue *see* taxation
- Revolutionary Tribunal 54, 61, 63
- Revolution of 1789 5, 12–13, 17–18, 21–22, 24–27, 29, 33–61, 63–76, 78–89, 92; bicentennial of 333; causes of 17, 14, 34–35, 37; economic impact 63–66; internal opposition to 60–61, 87, 89; legacy of 84–87; myth of 89–90; social impact 78; *see also* Constitution of 1789; “Declaration of the Rights of Man;” Directory; Estates-General; Jacobins; Legislative Assembly; Mirabeau, Comte de; National Assembly; National Convention; Robespierre, Maximilien; Sièyes, abbé; *sans-culottes*; Terror; Thermidor
- Revolution of 1830, 90–93, 97, 100, 142; *see also* July Monarchy
- Revolution of 1848, 113, 115–123, 126, 137, 148, 246; *see also* Napoleon III; Second Republic
- Reynaud, Paul (prime minister) 227, 249, 252, 254, 256
- Rhineland 55, 229; occupation of after World War I 219–220; remilitarization of 245, 248, 251
- Rhine River 1, 5, 75, 219
- Rhône River 1
- Richelieu, Cardinal (minister of Louis XIV) 26
- Richelieu, Duc de (minister of Louis XVIII) 85
- Richer, Léon (feminist) 180
- Rimbaud, Arthur (poet) 188
- Rite of Spring* (ballet) 199
- RMI (revenu minimum d’insertion) 330
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain (novelist) 309
- Robespierre, Augustin (deputy) 72
- Robespierre, Maximilien (Jacobin leader) 44, 49, 51, 55, 57, 59, 60–61, 63, 66, 65, 99; in National Assembly 49; in National Convention 57, 59; overthrow of 62, 63; *see also* Jacobins
- Rocard, Michel (politician) 330–331
- Roche, Daniel (historian) 105
- Rochefort, Henri de (journalist) 138
- Rocque, François de la (politician) 243
- Roland, Madame (Girondin leader) 58
- Roland, Pauline (journalist) 95
- Rolland, Romain (writer) 212
- Romance of the Rose, The* (medieval novel) 6
- Roman Empire 1
- Romania 225, 251, 313
- romans-feuilletons* (serial novels) 112
- romanticism 22, 79, 90, 97–98, 111, 136
- Rome 66, 77, 97, 112, 121, 137, 290
- Rommel, Erwin (German general) 265
- Roosevelt, Franklin D. (United States President) 246, 299
- Rothschild, James (banker) 105, 111
- Rouen 94, 102, 105, 162
- Roume, Ernest (colonial administrator) 198
- Rousseau, Henri (painter) 198
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (philosopher) 8, 12, 21–22, 42, 60
- Roussel Law 181
- Roussel, Nelly (feminist) 237
- Royal, Sérgolène 344, 347
- Royer-Collard, Pierre Paul (political writer) 85
- Ruhr, occupation of 225–226, 230
- Rules of the Game* (film) 241
- Russia 2, 32, 69, 76–77, 81, 131, 170–171, 202–203, 222, 235, 237, 300, 335; French investment in 163, 169; French treaty with (1894) 164, 170–171; role in World War II 265, 266; during World War I 201, 213, 216–217, 219, 223, 225
- Russian Revolution (1917) 216, 225
- Russo-Turkish War (1878) 156
- Rwandan genocide 332
- Saarland 219
- Sacre-Coeur basilica 148
- Saint-Domingue 51–52, 60, 67, 74–75, 86
- Sainteny, Jean (civil administrator) 285
- Saint-Etienne 144, 162, 165
- Saint-Helena 114
- Saint-Just, Louis Antoine (revolutionary) 55, 57, 61
- Saint Petersburg 169, 203
- Saint-Pierre and Miquelon (islands) 131, 297
- Saint-Simon, Henri de (socialist) 95–97, 136
- Saint-Simonians 95, 112, 121, 124, 126, 133, 134, 240
- Salengro, Roger (interior minister) 249
- Salon des arts ménagers* (trade fair) 306
- Salut les copains!* (magazine) 310
- same-sex marriage 348; *see also* ‘Manif pour tous’
- Sand, George (novelist) 96, 112, 117
- Sangnier, Marc (Catholic activist) 168
- sans-culottes* 53–54, 56, 61, 64–65
- Sarkozy, Nicolas (president) 334, 342–348, 35, 371
- Sarraute, Natalie (novelist) 309

- Sartre, Jean-Paul (author) 266, 287–289, 306, 309
 Satie, Erik (composer) 198
 Saumoneau, Louise (socialist) 212
 Savoy 1, 2, 132
 Saxony 32
 Say, Jean-Baptiste (economist) 80
 Scheurer-Kestner, Auguste (senator) 17
 Schlieffen Plan 205–206
 Schoelcher, Victor (abolitionist) 113, 118
 Schoenberg, Arnold (composer) 236
 Schumann, Robert (politician) 284
 Scott, F. Scott Fitzgerald 235
 Sebastopol 131
 Second Empire 96, 104, 124–140, 141, 143, 151, 154–155, 158–159, 161–162, 180, 184, 187, 196, 293; challenges to 125–126, 133–143, 155; economic growth during 126–132; fall of 133, 137–140, 143–144, 196; historians' view of 140; political liberalization 135–136, 138–139; proclamation of 124, 125; social divisions within 125, 128–129, 134; *see also Napoleon III*
 Second International 177
 "Second Left" 292, 312, 317, 330
 Second Republic 123, 131, 134, 141, 151; *see also Napoleon III; Revolution of 1848*
Second Sex, The (essay) 288
 Secretariat on Women's Status 319, 325
 Secret Army Organization (OAS) 297
 Sedan: battle of (1870) 139–141, 142, 146; German breakthrough at (1940) 256
 Sée, Camille 153
 Segonzac, Pierre Dunoyer de (army officer) 259
seigneurs 8
 Sembat, Marcel (socialist) 204
 Senghor, Léopold Sedar (African politician) 236, 294, 297
 Separation Law of 1905 229; *see also Concordat*
 September 11, 2011 339
 Serbia 203–204, 207
Service de Travail Obligatoire 270
 Seurat, Georges (painter) 184
 Seven Years' War 31, 34–35
 Sèvres (porcelain factory) 16
 Sèvres (college for women) 153, 180
SFIO (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière) 193–194, 204, 212, 223–224, 230, 240, 240–245, 249, 279, 291, 303–304, 312, 317; *see also Jaurès, Jean; socialism*
Siècle, Le (newspaper) 111
 Sieyès, abbe (revolutionary politician) 36, 45, 68–70, 71–72
 Sigmaringen 275
Si le grain ne meurt (autobiography) 236
 Silesia 32
Sillon 168, 240
 Simon, Jules (politician) 149–150
 Single European Act 327
 "Six, Les" 236
 slavery, abolition of 46, 50–51, 60, 64, 67, 75, 100, 113, 118, 131, 342
 SNCF 247; *see also railroads*
 Social Catholic movement 168
Social Contract, The (political essay) 21, 42
 Socialism 95, 113, 116–123, 128, 129–160, 166–167, 177, 193, 223–225, 246; and Bloc Républicain 177–179, 193–194; divisions within 118, 129, 166–167, 193; before 1848 95–98, 113, 116; during Fifth Republic 301, 315–316, 323–332, 333–336, 343–345, 346–347; formation of parties by 165–167, 194, 223–224, 315–316; during Fourth Republic 277–278, 280, 289; and labor movement 113, 117, 165–167; and Mitterrand 301, 323–332; and Paris Commune 149; and Popular Front 246, 248; during Second Empire 128–129; during Second Republic 116–123; since 2007 347–351; split with Communists 223–225; during Third Republic 146, 153, 160, 171–174, 177, 178–179, 188–189, 194, 196, 223–225, 228–229, 239, 250; and women 95; after World War I 246; *see also Blum, Léon; Guesde, Jules; Hollande, François; Jaurès, Jean; Mitterrand, François; PSU; Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire; PS (Parti Socialiste); SFIO (Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière)*
Société de l'histoire de France 113
 Society for Civil Marriage 159
 Society of Friends of the Constitution *see Jacobin clubs*
 Society of Revolutionary Republican Women 60
 "Society of the Seasons" 99
 Society of the Rights of Man 93
 Society to Improve the Condition of Women and Claim their Rights 180
 Solferino, Battle of 132
 Solidarism 176, 196
 Solzhenitsyn, Alexander (Russian author) 321
 Somme, battle of 206
Song of Roland, The (epic poem) 6
 "Song of the Marseillais" *see* Marseillaise
 Sonthonax, L. F. (French commissioner in Saint-Domingue) 60
 Sorbonne 195, 313–314
 Sorel, Georges (social theorist) 194
 "Sorrow and the Pity, The" (film) 322
 SOS-Racisme 329
 Soubirous, Bernadette (visionary) 112, 137

- Soult, Marshal (prime minister) 100
 Soviet Union 245, 250–252, 254, 288, 320, 325, 340; blockade of West Berlin by 284; de Gaulle and 298–299; after World War II 276, 279–280, 282, 284; during World War II 264, 270
 Spain 1, 31, 55, 66, 75, 86, 139, 156, 187, 198, 222, 235, 248–249, 251, 340; *see also Spanish Civil War, Spanish revolt*
 Spanish Civil War 241, 250
 Spanish revolt (against Napoleon) 80–81
 Spanish Succession, War of 31
 Spanish-American War, French reactions to 187
Spirit of the Laws, The (essay) 19
 Stalin, Joseph (Soviet dictator) 252, 254, 264, 270, 278
 Stalingrad 265
 Staël, Madame de (author) 66, 79, 85
 Stasi, Bernard (politician) 341
 Statue of Liberty 155
Statut des Juifs 26; *see also* Anti-semitism; Jews; Vichy regime
 Stavisky, Serge (financier) 243
 Stein, Gertrude (writer) 235
 Stendhal (novelist) 97
 Stern, Daniel (Marie d'Agoult, author) 96
Strange Defeat (book) 257
 Strasbourg 139, 267
 Strauss-Kahn, Dominique (politician) 346–347
 Stravinsky, Igor (composer) 199, 236
 Stresemann, Gustav (German foreign minister) 226
 strikes 110, 134, 164, 178, 182, 193–195, 210, 261, 282, 324, 345; Le Chapelier law and 46; in May 1968 314–315, 335; in 1970s 321; in 1995 335–336; and Popular Front 246, 249; after World War I 224, 233; during World War I 214, 217; *see also* Communist Party; labor movement; syndicalism
Sublime, Le (book) 159
Submission (by Michel Houellebecq) 349
 Sudan 170
 Sudetenland 251
 Sue, Eugène (novelist) 112
 suffrage: extension of 94–95, 100, 113, 116–119, 123, 275; and Napoleon I 72–3; restriction of 65, 84, 99, 122; during Revolution of 1789 51, 56; during Revolution of 1848 113, 119–120, 122, 123; universal male 113, 116, 119–120, 138, 140, 149, 151, 300; and women 180, 196, 237–238, 247, 303, 336
 sugar industry 17, 32, 51–52, 77, 162
Suicide of France, The (by Eric Zemmour) 348
Suite française (novel) 256
 “Sunday in the Park of the Grande Jatte” (painting) 183
 Surrealism 236
 Switzerland 1, 2, 66, 75, 212
Syllabus of Errors 137, 167
 Symbolism 229
 “Symbolist Manifesto” 188
 syndicalism 194, 229
 Syndicalist Defense Committee 212, 214
 Syndicalist Revolutionary Committee 224
 Syria 220, 248, 262, 273, 320, 349
 Tahiti 100, 183, 311
 Taittinger, Pierre (industrialist) 229
 Talleyrand, Charles Maurice de (foreign minister) 67, 81, 84
 Tanguy, Yves (artist) 236
 Tannenberg, battle of 206
 Tardieu, André (politician) 240
 Tariff policy 88, 133, 156, 162, 168–169, 171, 239, 290, 301; *see also* European Economic Community; Mélaine tariff
Tartuffe (play by Molière) 89
 Taxation 11, 25, 27, 28, 45–46, 65, 67, 66, 78, 81, 131, 152, 157–158, 176, 180, 195, 210, 214, 291, 326, 345, 347
 Taxpayers’ League 243
Temps Modernes, Les (journal) 288
 Terray, Abbé (minister) 30
 Terror, the 60–61, 63–65, 67–68, 72, 79, 93, 99, 269; *see also* Revolutionary Tribunal; Robespierre, Maximilien; *Sans-culottes*
 terrorist attacks 347, 349, 354
Texaco (novel) 118
TGV (train à grande vitesse) 15, 338
Théâtre national populaire 287
 Thatcher, Margaret (British prime minister) 329
 9 thermidor Year II, coup of 60–61, 63–65; *see also* Robespierre, Maximilien
 Thiers, Adolphe (politician) 90, 93, 99, 105, 125, 135–136, 141–149, 163; fall of 147; as Prime Minister in July Monarchy 100; and Revolution of 1830 90, 94, 99–100; and Second Republic 122; and Third Republic 141–149
 Third Estate 13, 36–39, 47, 49, 105
 “Third Force” 282, 284
 Third International 224
 Third Republic 118, 127, 136, 176–179, 210, 217, 223, 228, 234, 239, 262, 273, 276, 280, 284, 290, 293; and colonies 153–157, 196–198, 248; crises in 161–164, 176–177, 277, 279; and depression of 1930s 240; and education 148, 152–153, 237; end of 187, 258, 260; establishment of 141–150, 153–155; and establishment of parliamentary democracy 150–151; and foreign affairs

- 170–171, 201–204, 218; opposition to 152, 161, 168–9, 187, 195, 244, 260, 271; social bases of 157–160; and welfare legislation 179–181, 193
- “Thirty Glorious Years” 305–312, 328
- Thomas, Albert (socialist) 210
- Thorez, Maurice (Communist leader) 245, 246, 254, 279, 317
- “Three Glorious Days” *see* Revolution of 1830
- Tilsit, Peace of (1807) 77
- Tirailleurs sénégalais* 210
- Tocqueville, Alexis de (political theorist) 100, 105, 113, 115, 118, 128
- Toulon 58, 72, 265
- Toulouse 35, 144, 340
- Tour de France (bicycle race) xv 9, 233
- Tours, Congress of 224
- Touvier, Paul (Milice leader) 332
- Tousenel, Alphonse (anti-semitic author) 113
- Toward a Professional Army* (book) 252
- Trade Unions *see* Labor movement
- Trafalgar, battle of 76
- transportation 16, 17, 88, 103, 105, 126, 127, 155, 162, 191, 197, 274, 278, 278, 280, 281, 283, 300, 337; *see also* railroads
- Treatise of Political Economy* (essay) 80
- Treaty of Frankfurt (1871) 147
- Treaty of Paris (1783) 32
- Treaty of Rome (1957) 290
- Treilhard, Jean-Baptiste (revolutionary) 48
- Trielweiler, Valerie (journalist) 347
- Triple Alliance 169
- Triple Entente 202–203
- Tristan, Flora (socialist militant) 113
- Trojan War Will Not Take Place, The* (play) 241
- Truffaut, François (filmmaker) 310
- Trump, Donald (American president) 347, 350, 353
- Tunisia 156, 169, 289, 290, 294, 295
- Turgot, Jacques (minister) 13, 30–31
- Turkey 90
- Two Children’s Tour of France* (book) 153, 169, 176
- “U-turn” (in policy of François Mitterrand) 326, 333
- Ubu Roi* (play) 184
- Ukraine 350
- Ultramontanism 137
- Ultras* 61, 85–88, 90
- UMP (*Union pour une majorité présidentielle*) 339, 344
- Unified Socialist Party *see* P.S.U.
- Union for the New Republic, (UNR) 294
- Union générale* 162
- Union Nationale des Combattants* 243
- L’Union ouvrière* 113
- Union Sacrée* 204, 210, 212, 212, 215, 217, 224, 254
- United States xv, 32, 33, 88, 149, 187, 192, 196, 222, 225, 226, 227, 288, 289, 306; economy of 238, 310; expansion of 75; French intervention in Civil War 155; and French Revolution 55, 57, 68; French support for independence of 35; French immigration to 126; industry and 163, 190, 232; influence of, in France 102, 187, 233, 237, 239, 280–281, 284, 285, 291, 302, 304–305, 307, 314–315, 319, 325; as political model 120, 149, 308; relations with France under Chirac 329, 335, 339–340; relations with France under De Gaulle 268, 298–300, 302–303, 315, 320; relations with France under Hollande 347, 350; relations with France under Mitterrand 330, 334; relations with France under Sarkozy 345; Vietnam War and 281, 313; after World War I 218–220; during World War I 210, 213; after World War II 280–281, 289, 304; during World War II 252, 264, 266, 268, 273, 282–283; *see also* anti-Americanism; Statue of Liberty
- L’Univers* (journal) 137
- Universal Postal Union 185
- urbanization (in 19th century) 108–109
- Uriage, Ecole de 259
- Vallat, Xavier (politician) 246
- Valmy, battle of 54
- Valls, Manuel (politician) 350, 351
- Valois, Georges (fascist) 229
- Van Gogh, Vincent (painter) 183
- Varennes, Louis XVI’s flight to 49, 52
- Vatican Council (1962–1965) 308
- Védrine, Hubert (foreign minister) 340
- Veil, Simone (politician) 319
- Vélodrome d’hiver 332
- Vendée rebellion 56
- Venice 66, 132
- ventôse* decrees 59
- Vercors, plateau of 274; *see also* Resistance
- Verdun, battle of 208–209, 212–213, 268; war memorial at 234
- Vergennes, Charles Gravier, Count de (foreign minister) 33
- Vergniaud, P.-V. (revolutionary politician) 61
- Verlaine, Paul (poet) 188
- Verne, Jules (novelist) 184
- Versailles, palace of 5
- Versailles Assembly (1871–1857) 143, 145
- Versailles Peace Treaty 218, 220, 225–226, 232, 245, 250

- Veterans groups 234, 243, 260
 Veuillot, Louis (journalist) 137, 167
 Vichy regime 257–265, 267–281, 284, 293, 305, 322, 342, 347; and collaboration with Nazis 261–264, 271, 307, 320, 331; and colonies 262, 264, 268, 282, 296; erosion of popular support for 276; establishment of 257; in historical memory 322, 342; Jewish policies of 262–265, 267; and Mitterrand 332; propaganda for 260; United States recognition of 268; *see also* collaborationism; Jews; Laval, Pierre; Pétain, Marshall Philippe
 Victoria (Queen of England) 100
 Vienna, Congress of 131, 218
Vie Parisienne, La (operetta) 129
 Viet Minh 285, 289
 Vietnam 131, 156, 198, 222, 228, 284–285, 289, 294, 300, 313; *see also* Indochina; United States, Vietnam War and
Vieux Cordelier (newspaper) 61
 Vigo, Jean (filmmaker) 241
 Vilar, Jean (theater producer) 287
 Villafranca, armistice of 132
 village life 8
Village in the Vaucluse (book) 312
 Villèle, Joseph (minister) 86–87
 Villers-Cotterets, battle of 218
 Villermé, Louis-René (author) 109
 Viviani, René (prime minister) 196, 203
 Vlaminck, Maurice (artist) 198
 Voltaire (philosopher) 6, 19, 89
 Vosges mountains 2, 103, 206
 voting rights *see* Suffrage
Voyage to the End of the Night (novel) 241
 Vuillermoz, (Algerian radical) 146
- Wagner, Richard (composer) 129, 188
 Wagram, battle of 80
 Waldeck-Rousseau, René (prime minister) 175–176
 Waldeck-Rochet (Communist leader) 317
 Wallon Amendment 149, 154
Wandering Jew (novel) 112
 Waterloo, battle of 84
 Weber, Eugene (historian) 159
 Weil, Simone (writer) 241
 Weimar Republic 239, 250
 welfare system 281–282, 329, 354
 Wellington, Duke of 80–81, 84
 West Africa, French colonies in 3, 156, 170, 198, 210, 214, 216, 228, 253 (map), 268
 West Indies 16, 77, 310; *see also* colonies, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Saint-Domingue, slavery
 wet-nursing 181
- What is the Third Estate?* (pamphlet) 36
 William II (German Emperor) 201
 Wilson, Woodrow (United States President) 218–220
 women: bourgeois 8, 11, 20, 107–108, 128, 288; and Catholic Church 137, 148, 167, 174, 180, 182, 236–237; and *Code Napoleon* 77; as counter-revolutionaries 63; and domesticity 8, 107, 241, 311; during Revolution of 1848 117, 120–121; education of 6, 11, 21, 108, 135, 136, 138, 153–154, 180, 238, 258; French Revolution and 39, 42–43, 52, 58–60, 63–64, 65; and Giscard d'Estaing 318–319, 321; impact of World War I on 209, 213, 214–215, 237; and industry 10, 108–110, 191–192, 210, 214–215, 327, 336; and Mitterrand 303, 324, 326, 327, 330, 332, 333; Napoleon and 76, 78, 87; “new women” (in 1890s) 181; in Old Regime 9, 11, 12, 13, 20, 20–21, 23, 28, 37; and opposition to World War I 204, 211, 214–215, 216; in Paris Commune 145, 149; and Popular Front 245, 247, 250; in post-World War I France 222, 234–237; in Resistance 269, 307; rights granted to 100, 154, 179–182, 185, 187, 196, 204, 236–237, 317–318, 322, 325, 331, 336, 337, 342, 345–347, 350; and rise of the affectionate family 12; and Rousseau 21–22; and Saint-Simonianism 95–96; social roles of (19th century) 110, 113–114; in Third Republic 151–153, 160, 182, 237–237, 260, 277; under Vichy regime 261; after World War II 273, 274, 278, 304, 306, 312; *see also* Feminism; *Mouvement pour la libération des femmes*; suffrage
 Women's Solidarity Group 181
 worker-priests 307–308
 working class 9, 180–181, 244–246, 249–250, 311–312, 319, 322, 328, 341, 349; and Communist Party 223–224, 234–235, 245, 250, 315, 326, 328; decline of 312; effects of economic growth on 192–195, 311; growing self-consciousness of 109; under July Monarchy 96; and May 1968 events 315, 322; and Napoleon III 134; and Paris Commune uprising 144–145; and Popular Front 244–250; in Second Empire 125, 128–129, 134; in Second Republic 113–114, 117, 119–12; in the Third Republic 159–160, 162, 166–168, 192–195, 208; after World War I 223–224, 234–235; and World War I 204; *see also* Communist Party; labor movement; socialism; strikes
 World Cup, xvi 334, 341, 353

- World's fairs (1878, 1889, 1900) 185–186, 186; (1937) 221, 249
- World War I 201–221; causes of 201–3; colonies and 202, 210, 214; domestic opposition to 204, 211–213; effects of 215, 222–226, 232; end of 218; German invasion of France 208–210; home front during 208–211, 214–216; map of 209; postwar peace settlement 218–220; and trench warfare 207–209; war finances 210–211; women and 210, 213–216
- World War II xvi, 250–282; beginnings of 250–254; domestic effects of 257–269; costs of 278; French surrender 255–256; popular collaboration with Germans 261–264; preparations for war 250–254; *see also* Gaulle, Charles de; Liberation of France; Resistance; Vichy regime
- Wylie, Lawrence 312
- XYZ affair 67
- Yalta conference 278
- “Yellow Vest” movement 353–354
- Yen Bay insurrection 228
- Yorktown, battle of 33
- Young, Arthur (English agronomist) 15
- Young Plan 227
- “youth culture” 310
- Yugoslavia 225
- Zéro de Conduite (film) 241
- Zemmour, Eric (author) 348
- Zetkin, Clara (German socialist) 212
- Zidane, Zinedine (soccer star) 334
- Zimmerwald Conference 212
- Zionist movement 172
- Zola, Emile (novelist) 173, 174, 182–183



Taylor & Francis Group
an informa business



Taylor & Francis eBooks

www.taylorfrancis.com

A single destination for eBooks from Taylor & Francis with increased functionality and an improved user experience to meet the needs of our customers.

90,000+ eBooks of award-winning academic content in Humanities, Social Science, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Medical written by a global network of editors and authors.

TAYLOR & FRANCIS EBOOKS OFFERS:

A streamlined experience for our library customers

A single point of discovery for all of our eBook content

Improved search and discovery of content at both book and chapter level

REQUEST A FREE TRIAL
support@taylorfrancis.com

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

 CRC Press
Taylor & Francis Group