Summer 1988

Reform and Democracy: British and American Reactions to the French Revolution, 1789-1801

Martha Lingua Wheless
Old Dominion University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history_etds

Part of the European History Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/history_etds/28

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@odu.edu.
This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Glen H. Wheless and my father, George M. Lingua, because without their help I never would have finished this epic.
ABSTRACT

REFORM AND DEMOCRACY:
BRITISH AND AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION,
1789-1801

Martha Lingua Wheless
Old Dominion University, 1988
Director: Dr. Norman H. Pollock

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 had a profound effect on the countries of the western world. In Great Britain and America initial reaction to the Revolution was overwhelmingly positive, but as the events in France became increasingly violent opinions began to diverge. This thesis examines the diverse popular reactions to the French Revolution in both Great Britain and America. The role played by the governments of these nations in shaping public opinion is considered, as are the affects of the populaces' reactions on the governments' policies, which culminated in the suppression of the parliamentary reform movement in Britain and the victory of Jeffersonian-style democracy in America.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. THE PRESS, POLITICS AND PUBLIC OPINION</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THE BURKE-PAINE DEBATE</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. REFORM AND REACTION IN BRITAIN</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. THE REVOLUTION POLARIZES AMERICAN POLITICS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. THE CONSERVATIVE TRIUMPH: SUPPRESSION OF REFORM AND REBELLION</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. REBELLION, WAR AND PEACE</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The tumultuous second half of the eighteenth century saw wars and revolutions, new forms of government, empires lost and won, and the emergence of earthshaking ideas. There were two inextricably linked events with far-reaching consequences which dominated these years: the American War for Independence and the French Revolution. The American Revolution and consequent establishment of a republican government provided an example that would later be followed by those who wished to reform the French government. In turn, the events of the French Revolution and the conflicting attitudes which it aroused, profoundly affected the political character of the new American republic. While the American Revolution gave substance to the ideas of a person’s right to life, liberty and property, the French Revolution expanded these ideas to include the equality and fraternity of all men.

While certain members of the world community enjoyed the spectacle of King George III’s discomfiture after the loss of Great Britain’s American colonies, the convulsions of the French, while first a constitutional monarchy and then a republic was established, startled many nations out of their complacency. The relevance elsewhere of events in France was emphasized by the similarity of social and political conditions which existed throughout Western Europe. Monarchs watched the Revolution’s progress with mingled fascination and horror, concerned that the overthrow of the French king might give their subjects undesirable ideas.
This thesis focuses on how popular reactions to the French Revolution influenced the course of the reform movement in Britain and the growth of a democratic organization in America. The role played by the governments of these nations in shaping public opinion is considered, as are the affects of the populace’s reactions on the policies of the governments. The responses of the governments to the perceived threats emanating from France also come under consideration. Although this study examines issues reviewed in greater detail by numerous historians, its originality lies in the comparison of British and American reactions to events in France from the outbreak of the Revolution to the fall of William Pitt’s Ministry in Britain and the election of Thomas Jefferson to the Presidency in America.

In Britain and America, men who had come to the forefront in the battle over the colonies continued to lead their nations in the divisive 1790s. Included in Britain’s cast of characters were: George III, the king who walked the fine line of sanity; William Pitt, the chief minister, whose work was his life; and, Charles James Fox, head of His Majesty’s loyal Opposition, ardent defender of traditional British liberties, but intensely disliked by the King. Four Americans dominated the 1790s: George Washington, hero and father-figure, the indispensible man; John Adams, rotund and thin-skinned, but courageous when the welfare of the nation was at stake; Thomas Jefferson, the philosopher who envisioned himself as the protector of America’s hard-won liberties; and Alexander Hamilton, the financial genius and political puppetmaster.

1 Please see the bibliography for a selected listing of scholars who have explored British or American opinion on the Revolution.

2 Twentieth-century medical evidence has suggested that George III had an inherited defect in his metabolism known as porphyria. An excess of purple-red pigments in the blood intoxicated all parts of the nervous system, producing the agonizing pain, excited overactivity, paralysis and delirium that the King suffered from at least four times during his reign. Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter explore the nature of the King’s illness in their book George III and the Mad Business (New York: Pantheon, 1970). However, their arguments for porphyria against insanity are not fully accepted by medical opinion.
who strove to fashion the new nation in Britain's image.

These men and thousands like them were passionately interested in world events, as they knew that events occurring in one country could greatly affect other members of their small community of nations. However, not everyone in Britain and America took an active interest in politics. While historians have yet to determine an accurate accounting of the number of men and women who involved themselves in the politics of their nation, evidence suggests that this percentage rose when the government instituted new taxes to finance the cost of a new program—or in Britain's case, a war—and thereby affected the pocketbooks of the majority of citizens. For those interested in events across the Channel, or across the Ocean, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and letters provided ample information on national and international affairs.

The influence of the press on public opinion, and the governments' use of the press to sway opinion, plays an important role in this study of British and American reactions to the French Revolution. The politically aware read detailed accounts of the gyrations of the various French governments that the Revolution brought forth, formed their opinions and then discussed them with other concerned citizens through their newspapers and correspondence. Pamphlet literature also entered the discussion on the benefits and detriments of the Revolution, with Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* and Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* defining the opposing sides of the debate. Both the British and American governments utilized the press in an attempt to shape public attitudes toward their policies, while the factions in opposition used the media to criticize those in power and to place their views before the people.

The happenings in France, beginning with the fall of the Bastille, excited interest and commentary on both sides of the Atlantic. While initial British and
American reactions to the French Revolution were favorable, the accompanying violence soon created divisions in this opinion. Distrust of the influences coming out of France developed at different rates in Britain and America, with Americans taking longer to see the negative side to the violence in France. But in both nations the waves of the Revolution contributed to the growth of a conservative movement, which both governing parties exploited in order to maintain their hold on the reins of power. This conservative reaction to the Revolution greatly influenced the course of the reform movement in Great Britain and the development of democracy in the United States.
CHAPTER 2
THE PRESS, POLITICS AND PUBLIC OPINION

Throughout modern history the power of the press to influence public opinion has been convincingly demonstrated. The press’s reports of events in Revolutionary France aided in shaping the emerging political parties in the infant United States. Later, William Randolph Hearst’s "yellow journalism" helped to push the United States into the Spanish-American War. The foreign correspondents in Germany before World War II pointed out the dangers of Hitler and Nazism for their readers. The *Washington Post* unravelled the Watergate scandal leading to the first resignation of an American President.

The interrelationship between public opinion, the press and politics has been noticed and used since the mid-eighteenth century. In Great Britain, Edmund Burke, a member of the House of Commons, in his *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1774), insisted that the people needed to keep a strict watch on the conduct of their representatives to prevent abuses of power. John Wilkes and other British printers agreed with Burke and consequently fought to publish the debates of Parliament in order to reveal the government’s activities to the public. The nation’s intense interest in the proceedings of Parliament caused newspaper proprietors to assert that the parliamentary debates comprised their most important single source of news.

However, not everyone agreed with allowing the press to publish the debates. William Windham, a member of the Commons, argued that daily publication of the debates lowered the dignity of the House and fomented
discontent throughout the country. Windham also declared that publication tended to increase Parliament's responsibility to the public opinion and might lead to the British constitutional monarchy changing from a representative government to a democratic one in which the lower classes could control their betters.¹

American patriots, before the start of the War for Independence, used the press to pass information between colonies concerning the "unjust restrictions" placed upon them by the British King. The adoption of a new Constitution, following the Revolution and the Confederation, convinced many skeptics of the effectiveness of the press, as the newspapers' publication of the Federalist Papers swayed doubters into accepting the new form of government. Jeffersonians recognized the importance of public opinion early on in their attempt to form a viable political party in the newly constituted government of the United States. Thomas Jefferson felt that the people were to be cherished and not feared and that no government should attempt to check, control or rise above public opinion, but should try to merge with it. Jefferson saw in the mobilization of public opinion a principle vital to republican government.²

Even in the more politically advanced of the old monarchies public opinion was becoming a factor which politicians had to learn to lead. William Pitt, Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1783-1801, recognized this fact, asserting that the regulation of public opinion was of prime importance in the success of his policies and that the use of the press could effectively influence this opinion. Editors on both sides of the Atlantic emphasized that a successful republic depended on a well-informed citizenry capable of evaluating the facts presented

to them. The business of a newspaper, the editors held, was to spread information and the perfect vehicle for circulating the "political wisdom" necessary for "sound public opinion" existed in their newspapers and magazines.3

Sensitive to the voice of the people, the eighteenth century press in both Britain and America included letters to the editor in virtually every issue of every major newspaper. Citizens, upset with the conduct of their local or national government, vented their anger in their Gazette or Advertiser. Usually all that was required to get one's opinion in print was a lucid argument and a reasonable turn of phrase. Although the papers welcomed the comments of the public, partly because of the ever-present concern that the submissions might be needed to make up for a shortage of news from distant areas, not all submissions were printed. When declining a submission the editor would include a line in his paper regretting that he must decline the papers of "Cassius"4 because enough had already been said on the subject. More commonly, an editor might defer an opinion for several days because of lack of space due to an unusual amount of "important foreign intelligence."

Both the United States and Great Britain boasted a large number of newspapers. Sir James Mackintosh remarked in his Speech in Defence of Jean Pel­tier on the increasing number of papers found in all parts of Britain. Mackin­tosh felt that the growing number of newspapers served to increase the number of people who exercised some sort of judgment in political affairs. Newspapers printed in the cities travelled to many distant localities where no other paper made an appearance, and small town papers borrowed heavily from the city


4 Most contributors used pseudonyms when signing their letter, such as "A Democrat," "An Old Soldier," or "Cato."
papers to keep their readers informed. In America where ninety-five percent of
the nation's population was rural the public depended upon newspapers for
their knowledge of domestic and foreign occurrences. In 1791 the Gazette of
the United States wrote "Many people read newspapers who read little else--
They live in retired situations, and feel a strong curiosity to know the news,
and to join in the opinions of the day."6

Although neither Britain nor America, in the eighteenth century, had a
"national" newspaper, a large number of daily and weekly journals flourished in
both countries. In the 1790s, London alone boasted nineteen daily newspapers,
along with nineteen semi-weekly or weekly papers. In Britain each country
town possessed at least one weekly paper, but two weeklies often existed in
these towns--one supporting the Government, the other the Opposition.7 In
America approximately 106 newspapers kept the nation informed, with the
majority of these being weeklies based in small towns. The major cities, such
as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Norfolk and Charleston, supported at least
one daily, along with several semi-weeklies or weeklies.8

The circulation figures for the newspapers ranged from 500 copies for the
average daily in America to 5000 copies for the Times of London. However,
these circulation figures do not reflect the real importance of the journals,
because each individual copy was widely read. Inns, coffee houses and taverns
subscribed to several papers, usually reflecting opposing views, for the benefit
of their patrons. Britons and Americans went to the taverns and coffee houses

---

6 Gazette of the United States, November 30, 1791.
8 Dexter Perkins and Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The United States of America: A History, 2d
to peruse the news and exchange opinions with other customers. Illiterate men could easily find someone to read the paper to them and thereby become informed on domestic and foreign events.9

Newspapers in the late 1700s were usually four pages long: one to two pages consisted of advertisements; one page held news and extracts from foreign papers; and, one page contained the news of the day, chiefly concerned with domestic politics and letters to the editor. Essays, lengthy commentaries, and the proceedings of the national legislature could appear on any of the pages depending on the space available, or might be continued over several days. In Britain country newspapers concentrated on local affairs, but included national and foreign events especially during times of nation-wide crisis, such as the war against Revolutionary France. Regarding the news that appeared in the papers the Times wrote, "It is invariably our aim to obtain the most authentic information on all political subjects, and to state it with the strictest impartiality."10

The newspapers got their information from a variety of sources; one of which was other journals, domestic and foreign. British papers favored the Moniteur Universel of France, while the American press received their foreign news, usually eight weeks old, from British papers, some French papers and the Leyden Gazette. After the onset of the French Revolution newspaper proprietors sought out alternative sources to satisfy the public's demand for news of events across the Channel. England's Morning Chronicle sent one of the owners to Paris to arrange a flow of correspondence designed to "enable us to give an earlier account of what is passing there than any of our competitors."11


10 Times, January 20, 1791. All citations of the Times in this work refer to the London paper.
Once war between France and Britain was declared in 1793, the *Times* hired a light cutter to run back and forth across the channel to intercept fishing boats for contraband French newspapers. The *Times* and other papers hired foreign correspondents, who were paid small fees for sending reports back to England. Reports by ship captains and letters sent to private individuals were also used to give an accurate picture of events abroad.\(^\text{12}\)

Despite claims of impartiality newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic relied heavily on subsidies and payments from government and opposition factions to meet the expenses of publishing a newspaper. In Great Britain several increases in taxes and duties placed on papers basically forced the press to accept outside monetary assistance. Usually a political faction purchased a newspaper's support on an annual basis, paying a flat subsidy in quarterly installments. The papers supported their party's position in most cases; very few papers gave equal time to paragraphs paid for by the opposing side. The Government's control of their newspapers was more complete than the Opposition's, generally because the government had access to more money and more reliable news sources.\(^\text{13}\)

By March 1789, the Pitt's Ministry controlled seven daily papers, most notably the *Times*, the *World* and the *Diary*. The Opposition also controlled seven dailies, including the *Morning Post*, the *Morning Chronicle* and the *General Advertiser*.\(^\text{14}\) In addition to monetary subsidies the papers received

---

\(^{11}\) *Morning Chronicle*, July 12, 1791.


\(^{13}\) Lucyle Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press, 1772-1792* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 8; and *Times*, May 15, 1792. The *Times* refused to print an advertisement for the Society for Constitutional Information and an advertisement for the Society of Friends of the People, because the editors felt that the ads contained "principles which are meant to excite the people to subvert the Constitution."

\(^{14}\) The owner-editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, James Perry was a devotee of Charles James Fox. Perry made the *Morning Chronicle* the unofficial, but constant press organ of the Foxite Opposition.
additional incentives to remain loyal to their party. Both the Government and Opposi­tion would buy copies of their favorite papers and circulate them at no charge; a practice which ensured a wide-spread circulation of their positions on crucial matters. The Government rewarded loyalty by making certain journalists and editors the recipients of Government pensions. In what might be the earliest news "leaks", the Government fed its papers information from diplomatic dispatches. This practice made it extremely difficult for Opposition papers to compete with the Government journals in printing up-to-date news.15

In the United States, Thomas Jefferson, as Secretary of State, selected John Fenno's Gazette of the United States to officially publish the laws of the federal government. Jefferson also provided the Gazette with copies of the Leyden Gazette to counterbalance what he considered an overdependence on English papers for news from abroad. In 1791 Jefferson became disturbed by Fenno's lack of interest in publishing items critical of a strong central authority in government, and by the Gazette's growing anti-republican tone.

To counteract the developing bias of the Gazette of the United States, Jefferson, in consultation with James Madison and others, decided to encourage support in a new paper, Philip Freneau's National Gazette. In an attempt to give the infant journal a boost, Jefferson solicited subscriptions and encouraged his fellow republicans to contribute regularly to the paper.16 Jefferson also used his position to arrange for the direct delivery of the Leyden Gazette to Freneau, and to give Freneau's paper priority in news dispatches coming from the State Department. Following a common eighteenth century practice,

16 James Madison wrote Henry Lee: "I have received your favor of the 8th & handed to Freneau the subscriptions inclosed for him. His paper in the opinion here justifies the expectations of his friends and Merits the diffusive circulation they have endeavored to procure it." December 18, 1791, Letters and Other Writings of James Madison, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1865), vol. 1, p. 543.
Jefferson also indirectly subsidized Freneau’s publication by giving him a position as a translating clerk in the State Department. After the demise of the *National Gazette* in 1793, owing to Freneau’s poor business sense and an epidemic of yellow fever, Jefferson turned his support to Benjamin Franklin Bache’s *Aurora and General Advertiser*.17

Although Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States* denied being set up “under anti-republican patronage,” the paper over time came to represent the views of the Federalists. Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury and a leading Federalist, provided Fenno with a $2500.00 Treasury subsidy; a sum ten times the salary Freneau drew from his clerk’s job. Other Federalists, notably John Jay and Rufus King, also helped to found and subsidize newspapers, including Benjamin Russell’s *Columbian Centinel* of Boston and Noah Webster’s *American Minerva* in New York.18

The press in America enjoyed more freedom than the press in Britain, but both must be studied with an eye to the then existing financial arrangements. However, subsidization, especially in America, did not mean complete control of editorial policy. Freneau’s *National Gazette* reflected Jeffersonian ideals, but Freneau supplied the ideas and phraseology, as evidenced by Jefferson’s occasional discomfort over Freneau’s more vicious attacks on President Washington. On the Federalist side, Webster’s *American Minerva* often pursued an editorial policy that diverged from the doctrines set forth by Hamilton.19

In Great Britain the press followed the party line more strictly. When a Government paper diverged from the approved party line, the ministers punished the paper by refusing to give it any priority of information; more serious

---

18 *Gazette of the United States*, October 27, 1792; and Stewart, *The Opposition Press*, pp. 9, 11.
19 Stewart, *The Opposition Press*, p. 11.
lapses from the authorized path brought forth charges of libel. The Opposition Whigs possessed less control of editorial policy than the Government. The various Whig factions faced the dilemma of supporting some papers that were more radical than their paymasters. Eventually the more radical of these papers lost their financial support as the Whigs attempted to bring their press organs into line.\textsuperscript{20}

On both sides of the Atlantic the government presses tried to limit the influence of the opposition's papers by increasing the tax imposed upon printed material. In 1794 the British stamp duty increased one half penny and in 1797 the duty rose again by one and one-half pence. These duties imposed a greater burden on Opposition papers because Government papers continued to receive some relief in the form of subsidies from the Treasury.\textsuperscript{21}

In America the Postmaster-General instituted a one and one-half cent tax on all newspapers sent through the mail. James Madison, viewing this tax with alarm, wrote to Jefferson: "I am afraid the subscriptions will soon be withdrawn from the Philadelphia papers unless some step be speedily taken to prevent it."\textsuperscript{22} The public, concerned with the possible loss of a measure of freedom of the press, vociferously protested the tax, so that in 1794 the tax was reduced to one cent.

Magazines provided interested citizens in both Britain and America with news of events at home and abroad, as well as carrying reviews of books and pamphlets, articles on agriculture, religion and historical persons, poetry and songs, and essays on philosophical topics and national and foreign affairs.

\textsuperscript{22} James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, June 12, 1792, \textit{Letters of James Madison}, vol. 1, p. 561.
Although the *Gentlemen's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* of England reflected the Government's view on issues of the day, the magazine was highly regarded as a mirror of the times. American magazines included the *American Museum*, the *Massachusetts Magazine* and the *Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine*. These magazines aimed at a wide variety of readers and consequently stayed away from partisan politics. The magazines agreed with President Washington that political parties would subordinate the national interests to those of a certain party. The American magazines felt the effects of the postal tax more sharply than the newspapers did. The tax which cost the four page newspaper one and one-half cents penalized the magazines approximately twenty cents an issue, and as a result, only two of ten magazines survived the tax.23

Additional sources of information on events and ideas available to Britons and Americans included pamphlets, broadsides, libraries, sermons, and personal correspondence. Those who were interested in events at home and abroad possessed a wealth of sources for deriving an accurate picture of events. Most informed citizens recognized that there was a danger in relying on only one source for information. These astute gentlemen might subscribe to two opposing journals or might supplement their newspaper reading with their personal correspondence or the debates which often occurred at the local tavern or coffee house. John Jay, first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, noticed a desire of many gentlemen and ladies to remain well informed on domestic and foreign events. Jay boasted: "The people of the United States possess more information than the people of any other country." However, Jay recognized one danger in a well-informed public when he cautioned: "We

---

must not expect to be entirely exempt from the influence of private passions on public affairs."24 In this warning Jay demonstrated his customary foresight for the revolution in France comprised the main topic of discussion throughout the 1790s in both Great Britain and America, and this debate left few concerned citizens treading a neutral ground.

---

When the French Revolution began in the summer of 1789 few observers believed that it would have a wide-ranging influence on world events. The fall of the Bastille was at first received with almost unanimous pleasure in Great Britain. Many Britons saw the downfall of the Bourbon monarchy and formation of the National Assembly as an attempt to establish a constitutional and legal system similar to the one England had thrashed out a century earlier; a system which had become the model government of liberty and freedom in the eighteenth century. Britons, proud of their constitution, found it perfectly logical that the despotically ruled French would choose to establish a similar type of government.¹

After an initial burst of congratulations, British reactions to the Revolution varied, but an attitude of being disinterested spectators to the events in France prevailed. Some Englishmen suggested that Louis XVI was receiving just what he deserved for his interference in the quarrel between England and her American colonies. Others felt that the Revolution would benefit Britain by greatly reducing French economic and political rivalry. Still others followed the lead of William Pitt, leader of the Ministry, and adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the Revolution.²

applauded France’s escape from her absolute monarchy. Upon hearing of the fall of the Bastille, Fox said: "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, and how much the best!"3

Americans, who felt that they had a stake in France’s revolution, approved of the destruction of feudalism and the substitution of a constitutional monarchy for the absolutism of pre-revolutionary France. John Adams, then Vice President of the United States, "rejoiced with trembling" at the news of the revolution. Americans asserted that their revolution and the French Revolution were intimately related. The Americans had led the way by fighting the first successful revolution to establish human rights and liberty. The Frenchmen who had served in the American Revolution had become inspired by the American example and now were simply following the American’s lead in the creation of a new society. Reflecting this atmosphere of self-congratulations that echoed throughout the nation, the Gazette of the United States printed a letter from a citizen of Halifax County4 which commended the French for following the American example: "What a glorious political light have the Americans held forth to the benighted Europeans, hitherto stumbling in the darkness of bigotry."5

Observers on both sides of the Atlantic took a keen interest in the events unfolding in France. Many onlookers regarded the sporadic violence of the early years of the Revolution as the inevitable excesses of a generally beneficial movement. Charles James Fox in England and Thomas Jefferson in America


4 Several states boast a Halifax County, however neither the author of the letter nor the newspaper identified which state he hailed from.

5 Gazette of the United States, October 17, 1789.
believed that bloodshed was almost a necessary consequence in the overthrow of an absolute monarch. Fox deplored the spilling of blood but thought that the excesses of a people who had labored under a "severe tyranny" might be "spoken of with some degree of compassion." Jefferson felt that the "tree of liberty" must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of "patriots and tyrants." In a letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, Jefferson commented: "So far it seemed that your revolution had got along with a steady peace; meeting indeed occasional difficulties and dangers, but we are not to expect to be translated from despotism to liberty in a feather-bed."7

Other Britons and Americans became alarmed by the violence of the Revolution and grew increasingly concerned with the potential repercussions of the events in France on their nations. Early in the course of the Revolution the *Times* of London wrote that although the National Assembly seemed to show a great deal of "patriotism, prudence and application" in drafting a constitution, events in France might prove beyond the Assembly's ability to control. In a precient remark that foreshadowed events to come, the *Times* acknowledged its concern that the upheaval in France might lead to war between France and Britain.8 John Jay succinctly summarized the apprehensions of some Americans when he wrote to M. Grand in France: "The natural propensity in mankind of passing from one extreme too far towards the opposite one sometimes leads me to apprehend that may be the case with your national assembly."9 The issue of the necessity of violence in a revolution began an international discussion concerning the Revolution's benefits and detriments.

---

8 Times, July 25, 1789.
Dr. Richard Price, a Unitarian minister and advocate of reforming the system of Parliamentary representation, fired the opening salvo in what became the great debate on the Revolution. Price's sermon "A Discourse on the Love of Our Country," given on November 4, 1789, at a meeting of the Society for Commemorating the Revolution of 1688 in Great Britain, addressed the principle of man's love and devotion for his country. Price believed that this devotion should prompt an individual to promote his country's best interests by seeking out truth, virtue and liberty. Liberty, as achieved by the Glorious Revolution, consisted of

First: The right to liberty of conscience in religious matters.
Secondly: The right to resist power when abused. And,
Thirdly: The right to choose our own governors; to cashier them for misconduct; and to frame a government for ourselves.  

Dr. Price believed that two great deficiencies in English liberty remained to be redressed—religious intolerance and unequal representation. The French Revolution excited Price, who saw the "ardor for liberty catching and spreading," because the dominion of king and priests had given way to the dominion of law, reason and conscience.  

Edmund Burke's "Reflections on the Revolution in France and On the Precedings in Certain Societies in London responded to Dr. Price's "Discourse." Although Burke's Reflections contains a large dose of prejudice and some glaring historical inaccuracies, one cannot overlook its enormous impact on political thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. On both sides of the Atlantic, the Reflections set the tone of the debate on the French Revolution.  

Burke's dislike of the Revolution had formed several months before he

---

11 Ibid., p 46.
voiced his opinions in his *Reflections*. He advised M. Dupont that he would not praise the Revolution until he was certain that the life, property and opinion of French citizens were secured against encroachments, for without these essential rights liberty did not exist in France. After Dr. Price's sermon came to Burke's attention, he decided to refute the ideas expressed therein and to demonstrate that the new constitution proposed for France contained elements which differed radically from the principles expressed in England's unwritten constitution.

Burke disagreed with Dr. Price's assertion that the Glorious Revolution endowed the English people with the right to frame their own government, to choose their own governors and to cashier them for misconduct. Burke admitted that there had been a "small and temporary deviation" from the strict order of hereditary succession following the death of Queen Anne, but that Parliament had not asserted a right to choose their own governors. In fact, Parliament had enacted the Act of Succession to ensure that a hereditary monarchy would continue.

Burke believed that social rights were inherited from the past and embodied by constitutional precedents. Therefore, a country could not maintain greatness by disregarding the gains of past experience. Change could occur, but only through conserving what had been handed down from England's ancestors. Burke asserted: "From the Magna Charta (in 1215) to the Declaration of Right (in 1689), it has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity." Burke went on to criti-

---

14 Ibid., p. 45.
cize France's disregard for tradition: "They despise experience as the wisdom of unlettered men." Moreover, the French National Assembly had no "strict convention" to restrain it. Therefore the authors of the constitution could design a document which would conform to their selfish designs, and not consider the best interests of the nation.

The ideas coming out of the French Revolution threatened Burke's England. He believed that two hostile views of life and property were set on a collision course by the events in France. To Burke, those who wished to reform England's government endangered the authority and privileges of the Crown and the ruling aristocracy. The French Revolution's levelling of society, with its restrictions on the clergy and nobility, encouraged Britain's reformers to advocate drastic alterations to the "most just constitution in the world." In Burke's eyes this was unthinkable and he dedicated himself to opposing reforms of any sort.

Most Tories, substantial numbers of the Whig landed aristocracy and large segments of the British press applauded Burke's Reflections. King George III praised the work and the resident fellows at Oxford University sent an address of approbation. Horace Walpole, a Whig politician, stated that the Reflections exceeded all expectations while dealing the Revolution Club a fatal blow. The Times, joining the pro-Burke bandwagon, wrote: "Mr. Burke will

15 Ibid., p. 47.
17 Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France, pp. 57, 60.
18 Although the terms "conservative" and "liberal" did not enter into political jargon until the nineteenth century, most eighteenth century Tories and many members of the Whig landed aristocracy could aptly be considered "conservatives," while the Foxite Whigs would bear the label "liberal." In American politics, most conservative men--merchants, bankers, traders, lawyers--joined the Federalist Party.
be remembered with gratitude and admiration, by all those who prefer good
Government to the anarchy which democratic fury strives to produce." The
Annual Register called Burke's work "a monument of enlightened patriotism
and unrivalled political judgment." The Diary qualified its praise of the
Reflections by stating, "Perhaps he does not make sufficient allowance for the
critical and perplexing condition in which that political body [the National
Assembly] is involved."20 The Whig Opposition press withheld praise of
Burke's work and concentrated instead on extolling the virtues of Dr. Price's
"Discourse" and the work of the Revolution Society.

Burke's Reflections reached the United States in January, 1791 and most
of the daily and semi-weekly newspapers published extracts from the work.
The papers almost unanimously expressed their surprise at what they considered
Burke's desertion of the cause of liberty. The Gazette of the United States
asked if this was the "same EDMUND BURKE, who exhausted all his tropes
in praise of America during her late contest with Britain?" The Columbian
Centinel remarked, "Burke's Phillipick Against the French Revolution, shews
[sic] at once, how little the writer is acquainted with natural rights."21

Writers who disagreed with Burke wasted no time in replying to his asser-
tions. James Prior, Burke's biographer, traced thirty-eight pamphlets which
replied to the Reflections. James Mackintosh's "Vindiciae Gallicae" and
Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man were considered by contemporaries and his-
torians as the most effective answers to Burke; both pamphlets appeared in
1791.

20 Times, December 27, 1790; Annual Register, 1790, p. 64; and Diary (London) in
Rosemary Edith Begemann, "The English Press and the French Revolution, 1789-1793" (Ph.D.
21 Gazette of the United States, April 6, 1791; and Columbian Centinel, March 19, 1791.
Mackintosh declared, in his "Vindiciae Gallicae," that all men "have a right to be free." He continued, saying that government should be based on the principles of enlightened self-interest and should be "respected, not because it is ancient, or because it is sacred,—not because it has been established by barons, or applauded by priests,—but because it is useful."22

Mackintosh wrote that whatever excellence or freedom could be discovered in a government had been infused into it by the shock of revolution, because most governments avoided partial changes. In France, the National Assembly had "seized the moment of eradicating the corruption and abuses, which afflicted their country." Mackintosh approved of France's radical brand of reform, because he felt that "the opportunity of reform, if once neglected, might be irrevocably fled."23

The "Vindiciae Gallicae" received a great deal of attention on both sides of the Atlantic, for the work did not alienate many church-going citizens as Paine's The Rights of Man would. The Society for Constitutional Information elected Mackintosh an honorary member in recognition of the influence of his pamphlet. But the publication of Paine's response to Burke soon diminished the impact of Mackintosh's arguments.

In the course of the debate on the French Revolution the award for the most widely read pamphlet went to Thomas Paine's The Rights of Man. In The Rights of Man Paine expressed his belief in natural rights; rights springing from the Creation, antedating all society, which could not be abrogated. He felt that the poor and weak should be protected from exploitation by the rich and strong. The sovereignty of the people, Paine declared, overrode any claims to power.

23 Ibid., p. 421.
held by the monarchy and aristocracy. Paine envisioned a government of the people in an individualist society, in which the natural identification of interests was allowed to operate with as little interference from the government as possible.24

Paine refuted Burke by asserting that every generation must be free to act for itself, in all cases. He wrote: "The vanity and presumption of governing beyond the grave, is the most ridiculous and insolent of all tyrannies."25 To Paine, the Revolution was a rebellion against the despotic principles of the French government, rather than against Louis XVI. The abuses which existed in France, established centuries before Louis XVI came to the throne, were too pervasive to be remedied by anything but a complete and universal revolution.26

Perhaps Paine's most contentious passages dealt with religion, in which he disputed the theory of the divine right of kingship, by stating that monarchs, such as William the Conqueror, had established their rule by power and consolidated it by pretending to "hold intercourse with the Diety." Paine approved of the new French Constitution's reformation of the economic condition of the clergy, by raising the income of the lower and middle clerics and taking from the higher clergy. He also commended the abolition of tithes, which had been a source of perpetual discontent between the tithe-holder and the parishioner. Paine heartily endorsed the Constitution's establishment of the "universal right of conscience" with regard to religious worship. He disliked the idea of toleration, stating that it presumed to place itself between man and God, by assuming the authority to tell a man that he might worship as he wished.27

---

25 Ibid., p. 4.
26 Ibid., p. 11.
27 Ibid., pp. 56-59.
Paine's controversial pamphlet received a mixed response. Paine's ideas on religion and his assault on monarchy and aristocracy alienated most of the middle class in Britain. Paine's principal British support came from the lower classes, many of whom had The Rights read to them in pubs or at radical meetings. The British government believed that Paine's radical philosophy threatened the Government's stability, and, after the publication of the even more disturbing sequel to The Rights, the Government summoned Paine before the Court of King's Bench on the charge of seditious libel. Paine fled to France before his trial began, was tried in absentia, found guilty and exiled from England forever. Ironically, instead of diminishing the impact of Paine's work, the Government's actions increased the publicity surrounding The Rights and helped to swell sales throughout Great Britain.

Paine dedicated The Rights of Man to George Washington, President of the United States, calling his work "a small treatise in defense of those Principles of Freedom" which Washington had helped to establish. Most Americans, not yet disturbed by the course of the Revolution, applauded Paine's pamphlet, as they had derided Burke's. Thomas Jefferson felt that the work helped to "separate the wheat from the chaff." He believed The Rights reawakened the spirit of 1776, underscored the relationship of principles and ideals between the two revolutions and dramatized America's stake in the struggle for liberty abroad. Chaff-like John Adams, who deplored the contents of Paine's work, nevertheless recognized its impact on Americans: "I know not whether any man in the world has more influence on its inhabitants or affairs than Tom

---

28 The Times agreed with the Government: "Mr. PAYNE'S Pamphlet, in answer to Mr. BURKE, is most undubitably a libel against the Constitution of this country," March 24, 1791. Overall the Times had little comment on Paine's work, however Burke's Reflections continued to receive praise throughout 1791. The Opposition press, notably the Morning Chronicle and the Morning Post, approved of Paine's Rights.


30 Peterson, Adams and Jefferson, p. 59.

The major daily newspapers in America carried extracts of \textit{The Rights} along with letters in praise and condemnation of the work. Jefferson noted the "squibs in our public papers," stating, "In Fenno’s paper they are Burkeites, in the others, Painites."\footnote{32}{Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, May 8, 1791, Washington, ed., \textit{Writings of Jefferson}, vol. 3, p. 257.} Sending Edmund Randolph and James Monroe copies of the Philadelphia papers, Jefferson remarked on the "dust Paine’s pamphlet has kicked up here."\footnote{33}{Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, July 10, 1791, Ibid., p. 267.}

The largest cloud of dust kicked up by \textit{The Rights of Man} was the series of letters signed "Publicola." Eleven letters appeared in the \textit{Columbian Cen­tinel} from June 8 to June 27, 1791, all penned by John Quincy Adams, though many contemporaries saw Vice President John Adams’s pen behind the prose. Publicola scrutinized both Burke and Paine and neither escaped from his incisive criticism. Publicola labeled Burke’s \textit{Reflections} "one continued invective upon almost all the proceedings of the National Assembly since the Revolution, a severe and indiscriminating censure upon almost all their transactions." On the other hand, Paine’s \textit{Rights}, "containing a defence of the Assembly, and approving every thing they have done, with applause," was as "undistinguish­ing" as Burke’s censure.\footnote{34}{Letters of Publicola, No. 1, Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., \textit{Writings of John Quincy Adams}, 7 vols. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1913), vol. 1, p. 67.}

The concern for minority rights versus Paine’s majority will constituted the outstanding note of the Publicola letters. Permitting the majority will to function unchecked only opened the door to tyranny. Majority will could not be justified by any political philosophy, including the doctrine of natural rights;
people have inalienable rights, nations do not. "This principle, that a whole
nation has a right to do whatever it pleases, cannot in any sense whatever be
admitted as true. The eternal and immutable laws of justice and of morality are
paramount to all human legislation." These laws could be violated by the
nation, but not because the nation had a right to do so. If the majority were
bound by no law and had no rule other than their "sovereign will" to direct
them, what security was there for the rights of the individual citizen? Publicola
declared: "The principles of liberty must still be the sport of arbitrary power,
and the hideous form of despotism must lay aside the diadem and the scepter,
only to assume the party-colored garments of democracy."

Most American papers quickly reprinted the Publicola letters and shortly
after their arrival in London the British press published the letters in pamphlet
form, naming John Adams as the author. Consequently, the letters received
considerable attention on both sides of the Atlantic. "Brutus" published the
most lengthy responses to Publicola in which he defended Paine as the "inimit­
able author of Common Sense." Brutus advised Americans to read Publicola
"with a jealous eye" to discern the "childish" strictures. Brutus further warned:
"When men in office are good moral characters, we revere them; for their great
attainments, we respect them; for their virutous exertions, we love them; for a
denial of our rights, we cashier them." Benjamin Russell, editor of the
Columbian Centinel praised Publicola's articles and scoffed at those who
attempted to respond: "His animadverters, not answerers, swarm like Bees--and,
like Drone-Bees, they only buz."

---

35 Letters of Publicola, No. 2, Ibid., p. 70.
36 Ibid., p. 71.
37 The true identity of "Brutus" has never been discovered.
38 "Brutus," Columbian Centinel, July 9, 1791.
39 Columbian Centinel, July 2, 1791.
Answers to Burke, Paine and Publicola continued throughout the early 1790s, while the ensuing debate on the French Revolution reacted to events within France. The beheading of Louis XVI spurred discussion of his alleged treasonous activities. The war between Britain and France, the Reign of Terror, the fall of Robespierre, and the rise of Bonaparte all occasioned further debate on both sides of the Atlantic. As the Revolution wore on the lines became more firmly drawn between defenders and detractors.
CHAPTER 4
REFORM AND REACTION IN BRITAIN

The changes brought about in France by the Revolution startled the world. The absolute monarchy had fallen in a nation which had been considered to have the strongest monarchy in existence. And perhaps more surprisingly, the nobility, reluctantly, relinquished a large part of their feudal claims and the clergy, under duress, surrendered its ecclesiastical privileges. The Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizens promoted the equality of man and guaranteed the inalienable rights of citizens.

For those in Britain who watched the events of 1789 in France, the Revolution encouraged all who believed in change. Reformers and Dissenters in England welcomed the Revolution as an impetus to reform they considered long overdue. Continual appeals to Parliament, from 1787 through 1789, to repeal the Test and Corporation Act and give equal rights to Protestant Dissenters had failed. The Dissenters watched enviously as Catholic France declared all citizens equally eligible for all positions, and found it ironic that a century after the Glorious Revolution supposedly granted civil and religious liberty, English Protestants were still denied toleration. Reformers hoped that the French Assembly’s example of toleration and virtual universal suffrage might light the way for the parliamentary changes, such as the elimination of rotten boroughs and a more equitable distribution of representatives, reformers had advocated since the early 1780s.¹

¹ Brown, The French Revolution in English History, p. 29; and Goodin, "Edmund Burke,"
Many Britons viewed the bloodshed accompanying the early events of the Revolution with some dismay, but generally accepted this upheaval as a necessary part of winning liberty from a despotic regime. This view slowly began to change as violence continued sporadically throughout the summer and into the autumn, and Englishmen, via the press, began to voice reservations concerning the course of events in France. The World, a Government paper, wondered if Frenchmen knew how to use their newfound liberty to benefit all.2

The Parisian mob’s attack on Louis XVI and his family at Versailles in October, 1789, increased the doubts of conservative Britons. Accurate details of the attack came from various English sources in France and the English press carried complete accounts of events, spread out over several days. The Gentlemen’s Magazine described the crowd’s behavior as "a further specimen of the savageness and ferocity of a Parisian mob."3 Paris, according to the Times, was experiencing nothing less than a civil war, with the "BARBAROUS and UNRESTRAINED MOB" in command. Shockingly, the inept National Assembly could not restore order and the Tuileries had been "converted into a BASTILLE for the SOVEREIGN."4

Other papers expressed their positions on the fate of the unfortunate Louis. The Diary and the General Evening Post expressed dismay at the new outbreak of violence and sympathized with the plight of the royal family, but were less critical of the National Assembly. They urged the Assembly to restore order quickly and get on with the work at hand. The Oracle defended the mob by stating that while Louis XVI remained at Versailles he was under the influence of the Court party. The Oracle also reported that the National Assembly had

---

3 Gentlemen’s Magazine, October, 1789.
4 Times, October 10, 14, 1789.
made great progress in writing the new constitution, which ensured the rights of all men. Letters to the editors of both the Government and Opposition presses indicated that some English gentlemen were questioning the amount of control the National Assembly did have over the course of events in France and what the eventual outcome on these events might be.5

After the October Days the violence in France diminished and Britain watched with interest as the Constituent Assembly devoted itself to writing a constitution for France. 1790 was a quiet year as the Assembly instituted reforms of France’s finances, clergy, judiciary and administration. The English, through their press, expressed the hope that France would follow their lead and institute a constitutional monarchy. The British Government felt that a constitutional monarchy would counteract the republicanism that was growing in France. Both the Government and the Opposition endorsed the Assembly’s suppression of republican elements and the restoration of a degree of executive power to Louis XVI after he agreed, under pressure, to sign the Constitution of 1791.6

Louis XVI’s attempted escape to Varennes, in June, 1791, and his consequent virtual imprisonment further defined the opposing sides of the debate on the Revolution. The Government press, sympathetic to the difficult situation in which Louis found himself, commented: “We sincerely lament that we had it not in our power to gratify the wishes of every well-wisher to the true happiness of France, by announcing the safe arrival of the Royal family beyond the reach of the enemies to regal power.”7

The Opposition press emphasized Louis’s running away from his position

---

6 Ibid., pp. 122-23.
7 Times, June 27, 1791.
as constitutional monarch of the new France and commended the manner in which the National Assembly handled the problem. The Oracle, ignoring reports of Louis's coerced compliance, criticized the French king, stating that he should never have taken the oath to defend the new Constitution if he did not believe in it. The Morning Chronicle remarked on the manner in which the National Assembly had distinguished themselves "by their moderation in dealing with the escape attempt." Louis's flight to Varennes revealed that the division of opinion among the British people and press had become more pronounced and more identifiable in terms of party loyalty. The Government press usually sympathized more with the monarch's plight than the Opposition press did. The Opposition press continued to support the Revolution, with only a few reservations. The Evening Mail noted this division along factional lines, when it contended that the majority of informed and interested Englishmen took their opinions from the leaders in government or from other prominent men and did not seriously question the authority of their chosen oracles. Although this might be overstating the disinclination of Britons to think for themselves, many Englishmen followed events in France only superficially and were content to hold to their "party line."

During 1791 enthusiasm for the Revolution slowly diminished as attacks on the monarchy, the aristocracy and the church, combined with the more vehement cries of the Jacobins, to make more and more Englishmen wonder in which direction the Revolution was heading. Added to this growing concern was the fear that the Revolution's more radical ideas might spread to Britain.

---

9 Morning Chronicle, June 27, 1789.
Plans by sympathizers of the Revolution to celebrate the second anniversary of the Bastille worried conservative Britons. Government papers warned of the potential dangers of the proposed celebrations, by charging that "some factious men in this country, wish to infuse the French spirit into the English nation."\textsuperscript{11} The \textit{World} was more specific in its admonition: "Let Englishmen take warning, and guard that constitution, which has been for ages the nurse of heroes, the pride of nations, from being trampled on, or annihilated by ambitious democrats or canting republicans."\textsuperscript{12} As the date for the celebrations approached the Government press repeatedly suggested that if any disorders should result they must be laid at the door of the admirers of the Revolution.

The Whig Opposition press strongly denied that the French Revolution or the celebrations of it could represent any threat to England. The \textit{Morning Chronicle} ran advertisements from the Whig Club inviting the "Friends of Liberty in England" to celebrate the anniversary of the "late glorious Revolution in France, by which so many millions have been restored to their rights as men and as citizens, . . . "\textsuperscript{13} The \textit{Morning Chronicle} also played down the fears of the Government papers, affirming that the Whigs and their supporters sought only to improve the Constitution by extending the privilege of participation in government.

It is amusing to observe the silly and needless alarm which High Churchmen and Tories have taken up, and which they spread over the country by the display of their terrors. According to them, there is a levelling spirit gone forth, which aims to demolish every thing sacred and ancient in the kingdom; . . . Nothing can be more idle and unprovoked than these terrors. The Whigs of England, of whom Mr. Fox is the great organizer and leader, desire only to secure and improve the blessings of our Constitution, not by \textit{levelling the high} but by \textit{elevating the low}—not by abridging privileges, but by extending them—and all this by pursuing the legal course of reform pointed out by the regulations of our system.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Morning Herald}, June 7, 1791.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, June 2, 1791.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
If any violence occurred during the celebrations, the Opposition press declared, it would be because the Government press had promoted the expectations that there could be trouble.

Contrary to the Government's dire predictions, all but one of the Revolutionary celebrations proceeded peacefully. Toasts drunk at the dinners included: "The Rights of Man"; "The Nation, the Law, and the King"; "The Revolution in France; and may the liberty of that country be immortal!"; "The Liberty of the Press"; and, "The free principles of the British Constitution." The *Morning Chronicle* praised the celebrants on the "prudence and moderation of their conduct."

Unfortunately, violence did occur in Birmingham on July 14, 1791. A crowd, directed by unknown leaders, set fire to the Unitarian meeting house and to the house and laboratory of Dr. Joseph Priestley. Priestley, a Dissenter, had defended Nonconformists in a series of essays entitled *Familiar Letters to the Inhabitants of Birmingham*. Dissent and political reform were closely allied in Birmingham and the rioters decided to try to put an end to both.

The British press unanimously deplored the violence, but disagreed as to where to place the responsibility for it. The Government papers blamed those who had met to celebrate the Revolution's anniversary. The *Times* reported that the celebrants had inflamed loyal subjects by drinking disloyal and seditious toasts and handing out inflammatory handbills. The violence sprang from the "LOYALTY of the people, and the utter abhorance in which the principles of a REPUBLICAN SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT are held by the public at large." The *Times* regretted the loss of Dr. Priestley's "philosophical apparatus and library" but concluded that the mob had decided that private

---

15 *Gentlemen's Magazine*, July 1791; and *Morning Chronicle*, July 15, 1791.

16 *Times*, July 19, 1791.
property was of little consequence when weighed against the "general interests of the empire."\textsuperscript{17}

Other Government papers shared the sentiments of the \textit{Times}. They attributed the responsibility for the riots was to the Dissenters, and to those who had been talking about the "power of the people." A letter in the \textit{Diary}, signed "CLERIUS," wasted no sympathy on the celebrants and scolded Priestley for bringing the violence on himself.\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Diary}'s correspondent mirrored the sentiments of King George III and his ministry who outwardly deplored the violence, but privately approved of the results. King George spoke of being pleased that Priestley was burned out, for that made him the "sufferer for the doctrines he and his party have instilled."\textsuperscript{19}

The Opposition Press disagreed completely with the descriptions and speculations of the Government press. The Opposition charged the Government with planning the riot, and painstakingly detailed the almost regimental organization of the rioters. The press pointed out that only the property of known Dissenters and reformers sustained any damage. Additionally, the papers stated, the magistrates had held off reading the Riot Act, even after requests for protection came from those whose property was under attack. The \textit{Morning Chronicle} printed several letters from participants in the Birmingham anniversary celebration which called the \textit{Times}'s reports of disloyal and seditious toasts blatant lies. A letter from James Keir, the Chairman of the celebration, wrote: "The very first toast that was given was \textit{The King and the Constitution}. I do not know any words in the English language expressive of greater loyalty."\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Times}, July 22, 1791.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Diary}, August 3, 1791 in Begemann, "The English Press and the French Revolution," p. 166. See also the \textit{Oracle} and the \textit{World} for July and August, 1791.
\textsuperscript{19} Brown, \textit{The French Revolution in English History}, pp. 79-81.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, July 23, 1791.
By September, 1791 the furor over the Birmingham riots had subsided, but concerns over the future of Britain remained. The positions taken regarding the violence in Birmingham, and the anniversary celebrations in general, illustrated the growing fear of revolutionary ideas infiltrating England and posing a threat to the Constitution.

The ideas coming out of France, combined with the philosophy expressed in Paine's *The Rights of Man*, led to a revival of reform societies throughout Britain. The Revolution made reform a political issue for the first time since the reformers' defeat in the early 1780s. The reform societies, composed of people who believed that there was a need for the reform of the existing system of parliamentary representation, hoped to influence public opinion in favor of reform. The parliamentary reformers faced the almost insurmountable problem of creating a mass movement among people who experienced more discontent and suffering from high food prices than from the denial of their political rights. Except for those laboring poor who became involved with some of the more radical reform societies, the majority of the unenfranchized remained uninvolved in demands for parliamentary reform.21

The reform societies lobbied for changes in the existing system. Lord Grey, Charles James Fox's most able and active lieutenant in the Opposition, and other prominent Whigs formed The Society of Friends of the People. The Friends had two objectives: to restore the freedom of election and a more equal representation of the people in Parliament; and, to secure to the people a more frequent exercise of their right of electing their representatives. The Society was a stronghold of moderation and gentlemanly politics, whose members disclaimed any desire to borrow from the violent remedies of the

---

French Revolution. The Constitutional Society, founded in 1780 and revitalized by John Horne Tooke following the electrifying news from France, was another moderate reform group, willing to join with other societies in working for a more democratic political system.22

The London Corresponding Society was founded by Thomas Hardy, a Scottish shoemaker, and some friends in order to represent the "unrepresented" and make the wishes of the common people known. The Corresponding Society introduced the reform movement into a new layer of society, because any working man could become a member of the Society if he paid the penny a week subscription. The Society felt that every individual had a right to a share in government. The remedy for the waste of public money and unjust taxation lay in equal representation in Parliament. The Corresponding Society published its declaration of intentions, which stated that "this society do express their abhorrence of tumult and violence--aiming at reform, not anarchy--reason, firmness, and unanimity, are the only arms they themselves will employ, or persuade their fellow citizens to exert against the ABUSE OF POWER."23

Reform associations spread throughout Great Britain in the early 1790s. Societies appeared in Sheffield, Manchester and Norwich almost simultaneously and the movement gained additional adherents in the Midlands and Yorkshire. Scotland also experienced a growth in the number of reform societies. The majority of these associations corresponded with each other and occasionally, though less prudently, with the democrats in France.

The expansion in the reform movement alarmed the Government and its supporters. The Times summed up the opinion of the Government press:

22 Brown, The French Revolution in English History, pp. 53-54.
23 "The London Corresponding Society Address and Resolutions," in Cobban, ed., The Debate on the French Revolution, p. 120.
There are a set of men in this country, who who [sic] bellow for reform, but mean REVOLT, and who would go any lengths rather than relinquish their purpose. The meaning of the new clubs and association which they would wish to introduce and establish in this country, is certainly to diffuse an opinion among the nation, that our own Government is inferior to that of other countries; but the vigilance of Government will prevent these modern Guy Fauxes from doing any injury to the people in inculcating their odious doctrines.24

The Times also suggested that those who wished to alter the English system of government should be "gibbeted in the most conspicuous manner, as a common enemy and traitor to the Constitution."25

The somewhat hysterical statements of the Times overlooked the true nature of the growing reform movement, for the reformers were not revolutionaries. However, the Government looked at the Societies' agendas and decided that these men wished to irrevocably alter the English Constitution. The ideas of the inalienable rights of men, sovereignty of the people and universal suffrage were more liberal than the Government could comfortably allow. Pitt's Ministry proceeded on the assumption that ideas, which it saw as revolutionary, required support from organizations with revolutionary intentions, such as seizing power by force of arms. After France went to war with Austria, the Government began to emphasize maintaining the status quo in political affairs until conditions in Europe settled down.26

France's declaration of war on Austria and the execution of General Dillion by his troops after their defeat at the hands of the Austrians in an early battle, led to a further hardening of opinion against the Revolution. More and more Englishmen became convinced that the French were incapable of governing themselves in a civilized manner. The English believed that the unstable situation in France resulted from the disruptive influence of the Jacobins. The

24 Times, July 28, 1791.
25 Times, July 21, 1791.
26 Thomis and Holt, Threats of Revolution in Britain, pp. 1-2.
press voiced Britain's concern over the fate of Louis XVI who, in their view, was a prisoner with no real power. Both sides of the press still expressed the increasingly idealistic hope for the establishment of a viable constitutional monarchy in France.27

At home a series of incidents in 1792 caused Pitt's Ministry to worry about the security of the King and the Constitution. A large influx of French emigres, many of whom behaved less than decorously, fueled the Government's suspicions that the Frenchmen passed their time encouraging revolutionary ideas among discontented Englishmen. Additionally, two members of the Manchester Constitutional Society visited the Jacobin Club in Paris and returned to England singing the praises of these radical revolutionaries. Several Constitutional Societies embarked on a handbill campaign to promote the publication of an inexpensive edition of The Rights of Man, Part II, in an attempt to spread Paine's message to greater numbers of the laboring poor. These events combined to swing the sentiments of a politically moderate segment of the Whig party into supporting the Ministry's development of a policy to slow down the growth and effectiveness of the reform societies. The tolerant attitude the Government had previously taken regarding the societies' cries for reform and the circulation of what the Ministry termed "seditious literature" was at an end.28

On May 21, 1792 the Government issued a royal proclamation against seditious writings. The decree advised Britons that seditious writings "have been printed, published, and industriously dispersed," exciting the public to "tumult and disorder." All loyal subjects were to report any suspicious activities to their local magistrates, who were instructed to make "diligent inquiry" in

order to discover the authors, printers and distributors of all seditious works.29

Parliament's debate on the royal edict began on May 25th and the Commons and Lords quickly voted addresses of thanks to the King for the proclamation. Addresses of thanks also poured in from almost every part of Britain, as a result of town and county meetings held in response to the news of the King's decree. Some towns even went to the expense of advertising their loyal sentiments in local and London newspapers. This outburst of loyalty, spurred on in part by the praise of Government papers and exhortations from the pulpit,30 gave Pitt's Ministry some indication of the number of people who distrusted the influences coming out of the French Revolution, and who wanted to preserve the British Constitution from radical alterations.31

The Royal Proclamation Against Seditious Writings itself was not completely effective. The inexpensive edition of Paine's The Rights of Man achieved an immense circulation largely because of the Government summoning Paine to appear before the Court of King's Bench for seditious libel. One bookseller noted that his sales of Paine's work increased in three weeks from one copy to seven hundred and fifty immediately following the summons. The Morning Chronicle published "a never-failing Receipt" for giving a book an extensive circulation: "If any Government wish that any book should be read by all degrees of people, let them prosecute the author, and prohibit all men from reading his writings."32

---

30 The Times, on May 23, led the Government cheering section, claiming that the proclamation was acceptable to "all true friends of this country" and that it came at the right moment "when the basest arts are put into practice to delude the judgment of the lower classes of the people." For their part, the clergy endeavored to impress upon their parishioners the danger of sedition and French principles. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers" and "Meddle not with those who are given to change" became favorite texts for sermons. (See Laprade, England and the French Revolution, pp. 70-71.)
Also contrary to the Government's intentions, the publication and circulation of Paine's *The Rights* helped to attract working class men to the reform societies by the thousands. The London Corresponding Society created a branch solely to accommodate the large number of mechanics who wished to join. In Scotland, shopkeepers formed a number of new reform societies. However, the societies began to lose some of their middle class members who found some of Paine's exhortations distasteful and worried that the violent change of the Revolution might find its way to Britain.33

The events of August and September, 1792 in France caused the reform societies to again lose some members, and compelled the Government and its supporters to strengthen their determination to oppose any changes to the British political system. On August 10, after absorbing the news of a series of defeats on the battlefield, a mob stormed the Tuileries, the royal residence, massacred the Swiss Guard and imprisoned the royal family in the Temple. The establishment of a provisional government to replace the constitutional monarchy resulted in a conflict between the moderate Girondins and radical Montagnards which eventually culminated in the Reign of Terror. The new executive government expelled all refractory priests, 2,000 of whom sought sanctuary in England. After the fall of Verdun, Parisian mobs killed over 1,400 people in a series of atrocities later known as the September Massacres. To the British, the French appeared unable to govern themselves without a vast amount of bloodshed, and many Britons now concluded that the Revolution no longer possessed any admirable qualities.34

The Government press sympathized totally with the royal family and strongly expressed its indignation at Louis' dethronement. The press labelled

---

32 Morning Chronicle, January 8, 1793.
the slaughter of the Swiss Guard an outrage and the September Massacres an act of barbarism, while it lay the blame for both events at the feet of the Jacobins. The *Times* used the occasion to warn Britain and urge its readers to "pray that your happy Constitution may never be outraged by the despotic tyranny of Equalization."\(^{35}\)

The Opposition press also condemned the violence and blamed the Jacobins. The more radical of the papers ventured the opinion that the behavior of the crowd at the Tuileries was no more reprehensible than the conduct of the "despots who provoked them." The Opposition papers, however, had no words to justify the actions of the Parisians during the September Massacres. The papers could only deplore the violence while attempting to defend the Revolution's basic principles.\(^{36}\)

Many Britons strongly disapproved of the establishment of the Republic in place of the Legislative Assembly. This disapproval stemmed from the loss of any chance of France establishing a working constitutional monarchy, in England's image. The preservation of the Revolution became the *raison d'être* of the new French government. In November, 1792 the Convention declared a policy of universal revolution, and thereby set an example followed in 1919 by V. I. Lenin at the Third International. In an attempt to spread the benefits of its Revolution the Republic offered the assistance of French armies to all people who wished to follow the French lead.\(^{37}\)

The British Government felt that this declaration threatened its very existence. In response to the Convention's offer the radical reform groups stepped up their out-of-door agitation for change. Loyalists began to believe

\(^{35}\) *Times*, September 10, 1792.  
\(^{36}\) *Morning Chronicle*, September 8, 10, and 18, 1792.  
that the revolutionary forces operating in France had been exported to England. The Government, after several months of rising tension, decided that a revolution was indeed possible and that the militia should prepare themselves for action. Responding to the perceived threat to the Constitution the loyalist population began to form associations with the expressed purpose of "undeceiving" anyone who supported the plans of the radical reform societies.38

The first loyalist association was founded by John Reeves, a barrister who had recently returned from Canada where he had served two terms as chief justice. Reeves's association, called the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers (APLP), advertised its existence in London and provincial newspapers. Englishmen all over the country followed the APLP's example and founded associations of their own. Reeves welcomed all communications with other loyalist societies and more than two hundred sent him copies of their original resolutions and requested materials to distribute in their area. However, the number of societies communicating with Reeves represented only a fraction of the loyalist associations established throughout Britain.39

People from all walks of life joined the loyalist associations. These groups determined to preserve the Constitution in toto and to fight off any attempts to alter the existing system. In a scene repeated across Great Britain, a group of merchants, bankers, traders and "other Inhabitants of London" formed themselves into a loyalist association. After their initial meeting they advertised their "Declaration in Support of the Constitution of Great Britain," which invited "all our Fellow-Subjects to join with us in the Expression of a

38 Ibid., pp. 32-33, 55.
39 Times, November 24, 1792; and, Dozier, For King, Constitution and Country, pp. 59, 61, 63. From mid-December, 1792 through February, 1793 the Times printed resolutions from loyalist associations throughout Britain.
sincere and firm Attachment to the Constitution of these Kingdoms."40 This
declaration is typical of the expressions of support advertised by the loyalist
associations until the outbreak of war with France.

Not surprisingly the *Times* applauded the loyalist associations: "The
ASSOCIATIONS in favour of the Constitution have every thing to recommend
them."41 Also predictably, the Opposition press exhibited less enthusiasm for
the societies. The *Morning Chronicle* felt that the emergence of the loyalist
associations could only benefit the reform movement because the people would
now see "or. which side lies the greatest respectability of character and which
cause has the advantage of superior force of argument."42

Taking up the pen in defense of the reform societies, a letter published in
the *Chronicle*, addressed to John Reeves and signed by "A Select Club,"
asserted that the reform societies stood united in "defence of the *British Consti-
tution.*" The authors of the letter charged that Government "placemen and pen-
sioners" founded the loyalist associations to divert the attention of the country
from calls for a reform of Parliament. "Mucius" took this argument a step
further when he concluded that the true purpose of the loyalist associations was
to undo the Revolution of 1688 and return all power to the King.43

Responding to charges that the Ministry had hired him to found the APLP,
Reeves stated that "none of the King’s ministers knew or heard of this

---

40 "Declaration of the Merchants, Bankers, Traders and Other Inhabitants of London," in
Gordon D. Story, ed., *British Reactions to the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (New York:
University of Queensland Press, 1972), document no. 15, p. 3.
41 *Times*, November 30, 1792.
42 *Morning Chronicle*, November 28, 1792.
43 *Morning Chronicle*, November 29, 1792 and February 8, 1793.
association, till they saw the first advertisement in the public prints."  

Although historians disagree about the amount of aid Reeves received from Pitt's Ministry, evidence strongly indicates that Reeves acted in collaboration with the Government as part of Pitt's program to take the offensive against the reform movement.  

The Convention's trial of Louis XVI in December, 1792 caused a great deal of concern in Britain. Few people believed that his trial would end in anything but execution. By January 24, 1793 reports of Louis's execution reached England; followed in a few days by detailed descriptions of the event. The descriptions remarked on Louis's courage and composure at his execution. He pardoned all those who occasioned his death and went to the guillotine with a great deal of dignity.

Both the Government and the Whig Opposition, appalled by Louis's execution, utilized the newspapers to attack the Convention's decision. The Morning Chronicle summarized the feelings of the British press: "The murderers have triumphed over all principle, reason, order, justice, policy and humanity." Little doubt existed in anyone's mind as to the significance of Louis's death for England, and France did not keep Britain in suspense, for within two weeks of Louis's execution France declared war.

Even before Louis's death, reading the handwriting on the wall, the Times led other Government papers in welcoming war with France:

46 Times, January 25, 26, 27, 28, 1793; and Morning Chronicle, January 25, 26, 1793.  
47 Morning Chronicle, January 24, 1793.
We have for many months past been of the opinion, that the tranquility of this country could not be secured until there was some sort of fixed government in France. It does not appear that this objective is likely to be attained without the interference of foreign powers: Great Britain is the only one which can enforce obedience to justice and the rights of nations. . . .

The Times later asserted that since Britain and France found themselves at war, the time had come to "crush those who wish to alter the Constitution" and those who continued to advocate reform in Parliament should be considered "the enemies of Great Britain." A "Friend to Peace" summarized the feelings of many Britons at the outset of the war when he wrote that he considered the war both just and necessary since it was against a new kind of enemy: "One who fights not merely to subdue states, but to dissolve society--not to extend empire, but to subvert government--not to introduce a particular religion, but to extirpate all religion." The "Friend"'s pamphlet contained the key to Britain's determination to see the war with France through to the end, however long it took. France's call for universal revolution combined with her declaration of war to endanger Britain's security.

Generally, those sympathetic to reform opposed the war. William Frend, a Unitarian and political reformer, rejected the idea that Louis XVI's execution gave an Englishman the right "to cut a Frenchman's throat." Furthermore, Frend held that "if all the kings on the continent were put to death by their subjects, it is not our business to punish their conduct." To the Morning Chronicle, fighting for security, to support allies or to oppose aggrandisement was acceptable. However, none of these justifications, in the paper's opinion,
existed in this war against France. A war fought over principles, the *Chronicle* stated, could turn into a lengthy conflict with the danger that "we must go on killing as long as there are any Frenchmen left to kill."\textsuperscript{52}

The violence and chaos engendered by the French Revolution led to a tremendous decrease in the favorable feelings many Britons initially expressed towards France's experiment. The increasing calls for reform which the Revolution stimulated in Britain eventually caused the Government and loyalists to defend the Constitution intact, and declare any change unthinkable. Reform could not be considered lest it lead to revolution. The Government waged a concentrated campaign against the reform societies, throughout the 1790s, hoping to diminish the potency of their message. Pitt determined that the surest method of providing for the security of Great Britain lay in persuading the majority of her people to rally around the cause of King, Constitution and Country, in order to defeat the forces of radical republicanism at home and abroad.

\footnote{\textit{Morning Chronicle}, January 30, 31, 1793.}
America’s reactions to the French Revolution took shape against a background of foreign policy issues. As the new federal government took office in 1789, Britain continued to control a series of forts within the northern treaty line of 1783, and intended to stay put until the United States recognized and guaranteed a permanent Indian confederation north of the Ohio River, and assisted English sympathizers in reclaiming land confiscated during the American Revolution. Spain controlled access to the Mississippi River and insisted that America had no right to land south of the Tennessee River. The infant American settlements in western Pennsylvania and Kentucky could not flourish unless the entire Mississippi River valley was free and open for trade. Whether these western American states would remain loyal to the new republic depended upon the government’s ability to arrive at a permanent settlement with Britain and Spain over the disputed territory.

Discussions on American foreign policy drew into the political arena men uninterested in domestic politics. The time was at hand when American factions would be identified as “French” or “English.” Americans noted the quarrels between the European powers and began to discuss the best method of exploiting these disagreements to America’s advantage. Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury and future leader of the Federalist Party, propounded the vision of America as a great republic, able to compete as an equal with the powerful European states. Hamilton’s agenda required a good relationship with
England, while the United States built the political and economic foundation of a modern state. Francophiles, the budding Republicans, argued that American interests required more diversification of her trade, which was, in their view, overly dependent upon Britain. These men also believed that a policy of economic confrontation might force Britain to modify her restrictive navigation laws and give in on all the disputed points left from the peace treaty of 1783.¹

Foreign policy considerations also helped to shape the debate over the nature of the new republican government. America’s revolutionary settlement was not completed with the ratification of the new Constitution in 1789. Throughout the 1790’s the parties to the debate, although sharing a powerful dedication to the republican ideal, could not agree on how democratic the new republic should be. Conservative Americans,² conscious of the fragile, untried nature of their republic, believed that democracy—direct rule by the people—was premature and would only lead to chaos. Moderate and radical democrats held that one of the major reasons for fighting the American Revolution was to ensure direct representation by the people; accepting anything less afterwards constituted a direct betrayal of the revolution. Two political parties grew around the answers to the question of whether America would be a democratic or an aristocratic republic. The Republicans wanted a relatively broad suffrage; while Federalists advocated entrusting suffrage, and thereby control of the government, to a propertied elite.³

² See above, p. 21.
The French Revolution accelerated the emergence of the two parties and sharpened the differences between them. Conscious of their recent past, Americans viewed France's Revolution in terms of a struggle between aristocratic and democratic groups. The Revolution dramatized the conflict between aristocracy and democracy that was echoed in the way the developing parties perceived their opposition with each accusing the other of endangering the republic by driving it toward either anarchy or monarchy. American criticism and the defense of the Revolution helped to clarify the American political debate. The attitudes of individual Americans toward the Revolution reflected their attitudes toward democracy.4

Most Americans welcomed the news of the Revolution in France. The Columbian Centinel applauded the news: "These papers are filled with accounts of one of the greatest REVOLUTIONS recorded in the Annals of Time—a Revolution which has restored to the Nation of France its long lost Liberties."5 Americans scoffed at the idea that the French had followed the British example of liberty. Lafayette, the American press pointed out, learned the principles of liberty and the rights of man during his apprenticeship under George Washington.


4 Buel, Securing the Revolution, p. 5.
5 Columbian Centinel (Boston), September 19, 1789.
Only a few men in America, including George Washington, Gouverneur Morris and Alexander Hamilton, found fault with the French Revolution from its outset. The natural conservatism of these men led them to detect elements of weakness in the developing situation in France which they feared could lead to greater violence and potential disaster. Washington regarded the Revolution as full of promise, but privately expressed a fear that the solution of the myriad problems facing France might not be found as easily as some might expect. Gouverneur Morris, soon to be ambassador to France, believed that while the Revolution was necessary and desirable, the hot-headed French tended to rush forward too impetuously and to veer to great extremes, which might lead the nation into eventual ruin. Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury, echoing Burke’s argument, intimated that he distrusted the Revolution simply because it trampled tradition.6

Such reservations were the views of a minority in America. The presentation of the key to the Bastille to George Washington and the reports of the eulogies pronounced in Paris upon the death of Benjamin Franklin served to remind the American people of the similarity in interests and aspirations that France and America shared. Overall, Americans heartily approved of the Revolution and congratulated themselves on leading the way.

Events in France loomed large in the American press, but during 1790 and for most of 1791, there was little public or editorial comment concerning French affairs. Americans confined most of their attention to domestic affairs such as the public debt issue, Hamilton’s plan to assume the states’ debts, and the permanent location of the nation’s capital.

However, a few exceptions to this lack of comment about French affairs stand out. In April, 1791 the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania published the congratulatory statement which they had sent to the French National Assembly. The Representatives expressed their "sympathetic feelings on the subject of their [the National Assembly's] virtuous exertions in the cause of freedom." In September, 1791, Massachusetts Magazine reported on the French royal family's escape attempt and speculated that if Louis XVI accepted the constitution all hopes for a counter-revolution would end. The press noted the violence attending the Revolution, but expressed no doubts about its essential goodness. The events of revolutionary France did not yet excite the amount of comment in America that they had in Europe.

In November and December 1791, Louis XVI acceptance of the new Constitution caused a reawakening of commentary on the Revolution. Most Americans thought favorably of the new constitution, if they considered it at all. France had become a constitutional monarchy, which was a great improvement over the old, absolute monarchy. The Gazette of the United States noted that the "principle of improvement" was included, "so that, if on experiment, it should be found inadequate" the constitution could be "carried to the desired degree of perfection." The National Gazette concluded that the king's acceptance of the constitution had "completed the French revolution." Many newspapers and magazines concurred with the National Gazette: Louis's acceptance of the constitution, combined with the peaceful election of the Legislative Assembly, convinced American observers that the Revolution was over and a stable government had been established in France. American interest in a Revolution which seemed completed reached a low point by the end of 1791.

---

7 Gazette of the United States, April 23, 1791.
8 Gazette of the United States, November 19, 1791.
9 National Gazette, December 12, 1791.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
Interest in the Revolution revived with the outbreak of war between France and Austria in April, 1792, which seemed to be developing into a wider European war as Prussia joined in on Austria's side. Americans happily supported France's war against these European monarchies. The American press carried extensive accounts of the battles, including the approach of Prussian forces toward Paris, which triggered the August slaughter of the Swiss Guard and the forced dethronment of Louis XVI by the Parisian mobs. The account of the overthrow of the monarchy was soon followed by news of the flight of Lafayette and the September Massacres.

Americans, who at this point tended to be forgiving, generally deplored the violence of these events but did not criticize the Revolution. The Federalist-leaning Columbian Centinel wrote: "Notwithstanding the late excesses of the republican party in France, the cause of the French is still that of humanity—is still the cause of freedom." Anti-monarchial Americans cheered the replacement of the National Assembly by the Convention and applauded the flight of Lafayette to Austria, following an aborted attempt to restore the monarchy. But Lafayette's flight worried Americans as he was a link between France and America, a hero of both revolutions. The National Gazette printed an open invitation for Lafayette to seek shelter in America, and assured the "foster son" of Washington a warm welcome.

The continued advance of the Austrian and Prussian armies threatened France's liberty, causing renewed excitement in America over the fate of her sister republic. On September 20, the tide turned with the French rout of the allied forces at the battle of Valmy, the news of which, when it arrived in November, set off celebrations throughout America. In Baltimore, New York, Philadelphia and Boston, as well as in small towns and villages, dinners, civic

10 Columbian Centinel, November 7, 1792.
feasts, and religious sermons celebrated the French victory and the blossoming "love affair" between the sister republics.\textsuperscript{11}

The celebration in Boston began with a salute of cannon from the castle in the harbor. Citizens paraded to State Street, escorting a roasted ox, carts of bread and hogsheads of punch, where a liberty pole sixty feet high had been erected. The marchers polished off the refreshments and ended with an evening of bonfires and illuminations.\textsuperscript{12} In Plymouth, Massachusetts, citizens gathered more decorously to hear a speech by Reverend Dr. Robbins. The text of the sermon stated: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever: for wisdom and might are his and he changeth the time and seasons. He removeth Kings." The sermon was followed by a parade through town and a ball which closed the festivities.\textsuperscript{13}

On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI was executed. Reports of the trial and execution appeared in the American press during the last two weeks in March. The press did not defend the monarchy, but reported Louis's dignity and courage during his trial and execution, while some journalists condemned his execution. "Cordelia" in a letter to the \textit{Columbian Centinel} bemoaned the loss "of the most benevolent friend of America" who supported the struggling colonies in their bid for independence from Britain.\textsuperscript{14} A correspondent to the \textit{Gazette of the United States} wrote: "Notwithstanding the fascinating power of the words Liberty and Equality human nature recoils with horror at the late massacre of Louis the XVIth." "A Freeman" concluded that "Inhumanity and insult do not, cannot constitute republicanism."\textsuperscript{15} Those condemning the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Bernard Fay's \textit{The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America} (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1966) offers an interesting portrait of the warm relationship between America and France, which Fay describes as "a story of love."
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Columbian Centinel}, January 26-31, 1793.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Hazen, \textit{Contemporary American Opinion}, pp. 169-70.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Columbian Centinel}, March 30, 1793.
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Gazette of the United States}, April 13, 17, 1793.
\end{itemize}
execution concentrated on Louis’s aid to America during her Revolutionary War. The consensus of these correspondents was that Louis did not deserve his fate.

Condemnation of Louis’s execution was not, however, unanimous. The more radical American Republicans either defended the execution or attempted to soften its impact. A letter in the Vermont Gazette stated: "Whether the execution of Louis XVI was politic or impolitic, we shall not at present decide, but the general fact that the French people have the right to choose whatever form of government they please admits no doubt."¹⁶ "Philadelphus," in the National Gazette, denied that the Americans should be grateful to Louis. The people of France, he contended, were the ones who actually supported America’s bid for independence. Philadelphus also pointed out that the king’s death did not wipe out the treaties of commerce between the two nations; America remained indebted to the nation of France.¹⁷ A letter to the Connecticut Courant excused the execution by explaining that the French people had endured so much abuse at the hands of the monarchy that they could be forgiven for their "most desperate efforts’ to rid themselves "of the tyrants and the tyranny."¹⁸

The debate over Louis’s execution continued over most of 1793. In time, the execution and discussion surrounding it, swayed previously uncommitted Americans to join the anti-Revolution minority in America.

American hostility to the French Revolution grew slowly and for a variety of reasons. The continued violence and attacks on personal property concerned many merchants, traders and men of property in America. Lafayette’s desertion of the Revolution, after the overthrow of the monarchy caused many Americans to re-evaluate the reasons for the Revolution. Accounts of the rise of the

---

¹⁶ Vermont Gazette, July 12, 1793 in Hazen, Contemporary American Opinion, p. 255.
¹⁷ National Gazette, June 8, 1793.
¹⁸ Connecticut Courant, reprinted in the National Gazette, August 17, 1793.
Jacobin Party, their violent overthrow and brutal treatment of their moderate opponents, and all the consequent bloody excesses of a revolution within a revolution, shocked many temperate Americans.

Additionally, the Revolution's doctrine of equality gave many conservative Americans pause. Equality of man before the law was fine, but no one could prove that all men were of equal abilities. John Adams explained this view of equality when he wrote:

By the law of nature, all men are men and not angels—men and not lions—men and not whales—men and not eagles— that is, they are all of the same species. And this is the most that the equality of nature amounts to. But man differs by nature from man almost as much as man from beast. The equality of nature is moral and political only and means that all men are independent. But a physical inequality, an intellectual inequality of the most serious kind is established unchangeably by the Author of nature; and society has a right to establish any other inequalities it may judge necessary for its good.19

The Federalist party represented these conservative ideas. Federalists believed that there was a natural aristocracy based on hereditarily acquired talents. Not everyone was intellectually and educationally suited to have a voice in government. Indeed, only a small, able minority was capable of running a stable, prosperous government.

The Republican Party's adoption of the French idea of the complete equality of men appeared farcical to many northern Federalists. A letter from "A Cit" in the Gazette of the United States derided the Republican habit of addressing their fellow Americans, white or black, as "citizen".

Not even a Mr. is admitted to precede a name at the present day--while their sable fellow-creatures are frequently addressed as "Citizen Caeser" or "Citizen Pompey, clean my boots, & c. & e." This may all be well--but to hear the Auctioneer cry "Twenty pounds for

Citizen Alexander—who bids more?” seems to be carrying this joke to [sic] far in a free country.20

Southern conservatives, already worried about the possibility of slave revolts, found nothing comforting in the ideas of equality emanating from France. According to John Rutledge of South Carolina “too much of the newfangled French philosophy” had gotten into the slaves. Fears of slave revolts continued throughout the 1790s, with good reason as the successful 1794 rebellion in Haiti led by Toussaint L’Ouverture proved. The fact that an educated slave and his followers could overthrow their masters and establish a republic only served to convince most Southern slaveowners that the ideas coming out of France posed a danger to their way of life.21

Another tenet of the Revolution that looked doubtful to Americans was the open hostility to religion. The initial moves against the Catholic Church in France did not bother Protestant America. The Civil Constitution of Clergy appeared to many Americans to establish religious freedom in France. However, the de-Christianization movement of late 1793 startled many Americans, including some who otherwise upheld the Revolution. Samuel Adams, Governor of Massachusetts and the Revolution’s ardent supporter, proclaimed a Fast Day partly to implore God "to inspire our friends and allies, the Republic of France, with a spirit of wisdom and true religion."22 The conservative press published accounts of the speeches and measures directed against religious institutions in France. The Gazette of the United States printed a copy of M. Dupont’s speech before the Convention which read: "What! [he exclaims] monarchies are extirpated, thrones are overturned, and sceptres are broken to pieces, kings are no more; yet the altars of Gods remain. Shame to the

---

20 Gazette of the United States, February 2, 1793.
22 Independent Chronicle (Boston), March 6, 1794.
enlightened spirit of Frenchmen!" 23 Most Americans could not admire the French government's rejection of the Christian religion.

Despite the intellectuals' cavils and the increasing unease on the part of conservatives, the majority of concerned Americans continued to approve of the Revolution. Defenders of the Revolution had the greatest difficulty dealing with the accusations of irreligion. Most Republicans contented themselves with appealing to America's religious bigotry. Why were Americans upset over Popish priests "who have been always striving to keep the people in ignorance"? "France does not wish to be under the despotism of cruel and crafty priests, and who can blame her!" 24 Others attempted to show that the charge of irreligion was unfounded. The *Aurora* quoted Article 7 of the French Constitution: "The right of peaceful assemblies and the free exercise of all religious worship cannot be forbidden." 25 Defenders seized upon Robespierre's speech on the Supreme Being as proof that religion was not dead in France. They advised opponents of the Revolution to look about for something else to criticize.

As new objections to the Revolution surfaced, its defenders sought to counter all arguments. The defenders of the Revolution were not the low, disorderly, irresponsible elements of the population that conservatives claimed. Respectable, able politicians and citizens, such as Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, George Logan and Albert Gallatin supported the Revolution wholeheartedly. Jefferson's opinion moved with the Revolution and as it became more radical so did he. On hearing of Louis's execution Jefferson remarked: "Should the present foment in Europe not produce republics everywhere, it will at least soften the monarchial governments by rendering monarchs amenable to punishment like other criminals." 26 Many defenders sincerely believed that

---

23 *Gazette of the United States*, March 20, 1793.
24 *National Gazette*, March 27, 1793.
25 *Aurora*, February 18, 1794.
America's own freedoms were bound up inextricably with those of France, and that these liberties were menaced by all of the monarchs of Europe. The fundamental right of self-defense pardoned any excesses committed by France.

Albert Gallatin, Congressman from Pennsylvania, wrote:

As long as the combined despots press upon every frontier and employ every engine to destroy and distress the interior parts, I think they and they alone are answerable for every act of severity and injustice, for every excess, nay, for every crime, which either of the contending parties in France may have committed.27

The defenders also continued to support the Convention and Robespierre's Revolutionary Government, not because they approved of everything his administration was doing, but because they believed it to be faithful to the main purpose of the Revolution.

Closely following the news of Louis's execution came the news that France had declared war on Britain. Americans had something new to discuss. The imposing array of armies fighting France excited American sympathy for France. France's cause became the cause of "universal Freedom." Many sympathizers saw America and France as sister republics, facing a hostile, monarchical world. America needed to support France in her battle with the European monarchies or the cause of freedom could be lost. Western Americans enthusiastically supported the idea of aiding France because they believed that France would help in ousting Britain and Spain from the Mississippi and St. Lawrence Rivers, thereby opening the rivers to American trade.28 An editorial from the American Daily Advertiser viewed the war between Britain and France as one "of the kingly power against that of the people of the world."29

26 Hazen, Contemporary American Opinion, p. 258.
29 American Daily Advertiser, reprinted in the National Gazette, March 30, 1793.
President Washington did not rejoice in the news of the extension of the war in Europe, and quickly determined that the United States had to stay out of the war. Pragmatically, Washington judged that the infant nation was not strong enough to become involved in what could prove to be a lengthy and costly war. Nor could the United States afford to choose sides between Britain, a major trading partner with whom she was not completely disengaged in the West, and France, an old ally and now a sister republic with much admired political principles. Washington conferred with his Cabinet and concluded that a declaration of neutrality would best serve the interests of the United States.

This decision received the approval of the leaders of both the developing political parties--Hamilton as head of the Federalists and Jefferson as leader of the Republicans. However, they approved of neutrality for totally different reasons. Hamilton, not wanting an end to British trade, argued that the treaties of 1778 between America and France were not in force because the treaties had been made with the French monarch, Louis XVI. Additionally, the treaties established a defensive alliance where one party would come to the aid of another if that party were attacked. Since France declared war on Britain, and had not been attacked by her, the treaties did not compel the United States to come to France's aid. For his part, Jefferson favored neutrality because he felt it could be used to try to wrest concessions on the western forts or trading rights in the West Indies from the belligerents. Jefferson asserted that "it would be better to hold back the declaration of neutrality, as a thing worth something to the powers at war, that they would bid for it, and we might reasonably ask a price, the broadest privileges of neutral nations."³⁰ Regarding the treaties between America and France Jefferson held that treaties were made

between nations and that the people, as the source of all authority in a nation,
had the right to change their agents at any time. This change of people in
power did not affect the acts of a country. Thus the treaties between the
United States and France were still valid even though both nations had changed
their forms of government since making the treaties.  

On April 22, 1793, Washington issued the Neutrality Proclamation. The
proclamation declared that "the duty and interest of the United States require,
that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct
friendly and impartial towards the belligerent powers." All citizens were
warned to avoid any contact which ran counter to this proclamation.

The debate on the Neutrality Proclamation began almost immediately and
divided along party lines, with Federalists for and Republicans against.
Although Jefferson favored neutrality, he did nothing to stop the widespread
clamor in the Republican press for aid to France, particularly when he saw how
it embarassed the Federalists. The National Gazette asserted that gratitude and
interest alike demanded the active American aid intended in the treaties. "The
cause of France is the cause of man, and neutrality is desertion." The
Federalists found the charge of ingratitude difficult to answer. The Columbian
Centinel argued that all aid had come from Louis XVI, not the republic that
had executed him, as had the treaties negotiated between the two nations.
Furthermore, the loans France had provided America were none-too-generous
business arrangements. Leaders of the Republican government in France
unknowingly added to the Centinel's argument when, disturbed by American
sympathy for the dead monarch, they published documents revealing the

51 I lobel E. Cunningham, Jr., In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson (New
52 Nathan Schachner, The Founding Fathers (New York: A. S. Barnes and Company,
53 National Gazette, May 15, 1793.
thoroughly selfish motives actuating court policy. The Centinel reprinted the
documents, as did other Federalist papers, and comments about America's lack
of gratitude for France lessened.\textsuperscript{34} The \textit{Gazette of the United States} summarized
the feelings of the Federalist press by explaining that while Americans
sympathized with those struggling for freedom, the miseries of war were too
great for America to become involved.\textsuperscript{35}

A series of letters from "Pacificus" (Alexander Hamilton) and "Helvidius"
(James Madison) outlined the opposing sides of the debate over neutrality. The
letters originally published in the \textit{Gazette of the United States} and the \textit{National Gazette}\nrespectively were reprinted in every major paper in America. Pacificus
attempted to justify the Neutrality Proclamation by arguing that the treaties of
1778 were no longer binding on the United States, because France was not
fighting a defensive war. Expedience, not altruism, had motivated France's aid
to the ex-colonies during and after the American War for Independence. Any
assistance the United States gave France would force the unprepared nation into
a war against the world's most powerful coalition. Finally, Pacificus asserted
that nothing in the Constitution prohibited the President from issuing a procla-
mation.\textsuperscript{36}

Helvidius replied by pointing out that Hamilton's own \textit{Federalist} No. 75
denied that a President could render a treaty inoperative. Furthermore, France
was not waging an offensive war; she was fighting to preserve her new form of
government. Helvidius sarcastically commented that anyone holding an official
post under the new Constitution of the United States should be the last to ques-
tion the right of a people to change their government. The perogatives claimed
for the President, by Pacificus, such as issuing proclamations, smacked too

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Columbian Centinel}, May 18, July 31, August 14, 24, 1793.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Gazette of the United States}, June 26, 1793.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Gazette of the United States}, June 8, 29, July 20, 1793.
much of British ideas and could end all constitutional safeguards. The legisla­tive branch, not the executive, had the right to declare neutrality, decide whether or not the treaties were still in force, and determine the cause of the war between Britain and France.  

The discussion about the Neutrality Proclamation continued throughout 1793. In a move similar to the loyalist resolutions in Britain, townships throughout America sent addresses to President Washington expressing their appreciation for “the wisdom and goodness which dictated your late declara­tion.” The addresses, printed in the Federalist press, are numerous enough to assume that a majority of interested Americans approved of neutrality.

Another important issue faced America with the declaration of war between Britain and France. Washington’s administration issued the Neutrality Proclamation close to the time a new French minister to the United States was due to arrive. The minister, Edmond Charles Genet, carried instructions from his government ordering him to insure that the provisions of the treaties between France and America were enforced; no privateers were to be outfitted in American ports except on behalf of the French nation and no prizes permitted except those captured by the Republic. These were legitimate instructions under the treaty with one important exception. While the specific treaty article prohibited the outfitting and arming of privateers in American ports for use against France, nothing in the treaty gave this privilege to French privateers.

Genet officially presented himself to the United States government on May 17, 1793, a full six weeks after his arrival in America. He landed in Charles-

37 National Gazette, August 24, September 8, 1793.
38 For example see Gazette of the United States, June 26, 29, July 27, 31, August 28, September 7, 14, 1793; and Columbian Centinel, September 14, 18, 25, October 2, 23, November 2, December 7, 1793.
ton, South Carolina in April. While in Charleston, Genet commissioned privateers to prey upon British commerce and conducted a court of admiralty to condemn captured British ships. Genet also recruited American volunteers for French armies of liberation to march against Spanish held Florida and Louisiana.

Genet's arrival in the United States sparked an outpouring of popular support for France. As Genet traveled up the coast he was enthusiastically welcomed and feted at every stop. Merchants and farmers offered him "their flour and other provisions at a lower price than they would dispose of them to the agents of any other nation." A large crowd of supporters boisterously greeted Genet upon his arrival in Philadelphia. The National Gazette concluded that this warm welcome was "a proof to him that the Pennsylvanians were not behind their fellow citizens of other states in the spirit of republican patriotism."40

Genet—flighty, vain, opinionated, impatient, and obsessed with the notion of the superiority of his country over all others—was not the man best suited to represent France at this critical point. He was also wholly unable to judge the character and temperament of those with whom he dealt, but perhaps more unfortunately, he allowed the praise of American Republicans to turn his head and convince him that "the real Americans" fully supported France and only the President and the Senate stood in the way of a war alliance between America and France.

Disregarding diplomatic protocol, Genet continued to commission and launch privateers from his residence in Philadelphia. Washington forbade Genet from issuing any more commissions and ordered Secretary of War Henry

40 National Gazette, May 18, 1793.
Knox to instruct the state governors to prevent the outfitting of any more privateers. Jefferson, as Secretary of State, also insisted that Genet stop arming privateers and enlisting Americans. Genet expressed his "pain" at these demands, but agreed temporarily to cease his actions "until the representatives of the sovereign [i.e., Congress] shall have confirmed or rejected" the President's proclamation on neutrality. Adding insult to injury, Genet proceeded to inform Jefferson that the people of America "whose fraternal voice has resounded from every quarter around me," did not agree with the President. Genet advised the government to heed that fraternal voice and honor their obligations to France. Such language from the envoy of one nation to the President and government of another justified a demand for Genet's recall.

The incident which finished the impetuous Genet as minister to the United States concerned the secret arming and plans to launch the captured British ship *Little Sarah*, renamed the *Petite Democrate* by Genet. This action ran directly contrary to Genet's promise that no more privateers would be outfitted in American waters, until Congress met to discuss the issue. A rumor about the rearming reached Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, who then instructed Governor Thomas Mifflin of Pennsylvania to investigate the story. Mifflin sent the state attorney, Alexander J. Dallas, to investigate and, if necessary, to stop the ship's departure. Dallas called upon Genet and asked him to delay the ship until President Washington, who was at Mount Vernon on vacation, could consider the details surrounding the case.

Genet refused Dallas' request outright. The President, he asserted, instructing Dallas on the finer points of the United States Constitution, was not

---

the country's sovereign; only Congress had the right to interpret treaties, while it was the President's duty to convene that body and let them decide. If Congress decided against him, and Genet doubted that they would, then he would withdraw and cease his actions. Furthermore, Genet stated that he intended to publish his entire correspondence with the American government, so that the people would know exactly what had taken place. He would appeal the President's actions directly to the people.43

Dallas, shocked by Genet's tirade, reported back to Mifflin, who rushed to inform Jefferson. Mifflin repeated what Dallas had told him, including Genet's threat to appeal to the people. Later, when this threat had become a party issue between Republicans and Federalists, Dallas, a Republican, denied that Genet had said anything about an appeal to the people. In a bit of dirty politics, Jefferson, though he had personally heard the same threat uttered previously by Genet, remained silent and tacitly supported Dallas.44

Shortly after Washington's return to Philadelphia, the Little Sarah weighed anchor and embarked on her career as a French privateer. The Cabinet met and decided that Genet had to go. Jefferson, as Secretary of State, had the honor of dispatching the correspondence between Genet and the American government to France along with a request for Genet's recall. The government sat back and waited for a reply from France.

In the meantime, Hamilton decided that the Federalist Party could profit from Genet's threat. The story of Genet's appeal to the people was leaked to the press via a letter from Rufus King and John Jay to the Diary of New York, and a wave of indignation swept the country. To most Americans, regardless of their politics, Washington was a hero and above reproach. American public

43 General Advertiser (Philadelphia), December 9, 1793.
44 Spenser, "Appeal to the People," pp. 245-246.
opinion was furious that their President had been insulted and treated with contempt by the representative of a foreign nation. Americans might question their government's actions but criticism of their President by a foreigner was not idly to be borne. Meetings throughout America passed resolutions damning Genet and praising the President. Notices of these resolutions appeared in the press, while Washington, in Philadelphia, received copies of almost all the resolutions.  

The American press generally condemned Genet's actions. Only the more radical of the Republican newspapers sought arguments to support Genet. The National Gazette asked: "Why all this outcry against the Minister of France, for saying he would appeal to the people? Is the President a consecrated character, that an appeal from his decisions must be considered criminal?"  

Several papers asserted that the charges against Genet were merely a British plot to drive a wedge between France and America. The counterattacks on Jay, King, Hamilton and other Federalists combined with the shrillness of the defenses offered, gave the Republican press a hysterical tone. The silence of Jefferson, Madison and other Republican leaders also marred the effectiveness of the defense of Genet's actions.  

Jefferson determined that the Republican Party should separate itself from Genet at any cost. Jefferson wrote Madison that Genet would sink the Republican's interest if they did not abandon him. Madison concurred by saying, "The only antidote for their [the Federalists'] poison is to distinguish between the nation and its agent." Noting the damage already done by Genet's behavior, Jefferson informed Madison: "Hutcheson says that Genet has totally  

---

45 Diary; or Loudon's Register (New York), August 12, 1793. Reprints of the resolutions can be found in the major newspapers during the late summer of 1793.  
46 National Gazette, August 21, 1793.  
47 Stewart, The Opposition Press, pp. 162-68.
overturned the Republican interest in Philadelphia." Indeed, "disapprobation of the agent" had mingled with "Reprehension of the nation" to harm the cause of both liberty and France. Freneau, publisher of the *National Gazette*, and other radical Republican editors were left to defend Genet alone.

Jefferson’s attempt to divorce the Republicans from Genet was only partially successful, because most of the damage had already been done. Genet’s actions convinced many moderate Americans that the leaders of France were irresponsible and unconcerned about America’s desire to stay out of the war. Through the instructions to its minister, the Republic of France had attempted to compromise the neutrality of the United States. The American Republicans who had clamored for aid to France began to appear as impetuous and irresponsible as the French minister who had believed these people spoke for all Americans. Conservative and moderate Americans valued their peace and were not anxious to see it jeopardized by some emotional men with high-toned principles. France acceded to America’s request for Genet’s recall. Most Americans, in and out of politics, hoped his successor would be a more prudent man.

Thus, by 1793, the execution of the hapless Louis, the bloody excesses of the Revolution, and the insulting behavior of Citizen Genet combined to sway the opinion of most conservative and some moderate Americans from wholehearted praise of the Revolution to calculated criticism. Popular reaction to the Revolution also hastened the division of American politics into two parties—one fervently for the Revolution, excusing all manner of extreme actions; and the other censorious, skeptical that any benefit might come out of such a chaotic, violent movement. Future events in France would only serve to solidify this division.

CHAPTER 6
THE CONSERVATIVE TRIUMPH:
SUPPRESSION OF REFORM AND REBELLION

The war between Great Britain and France which began in 1793, lasted, except for the Peace of Amiens from 1801-1803, until 1815. Popular attitudes toward the war were shaped primarily by the disruptions caused by the conflict. Most Britons were concerned with the war only when it affected their lives through a lack of food, the threat of a press gang, an increase in taxes or other financial uncertainties. Day-to-day concern with and involvement in the war came from either the propertied classes or those involved in the reform societies. The government's justification for the war rested upon the threat Jacobin France presented to the King and Constitution of Britain. Not wanting to appear unpatriotic, the Opposition concentrated their criticisms on the financial costs of the war. The Morning Chronicle satirically observed: "It has been suggested to us by a correspondent, that as the war with France is a war against opinions, the expenses of it ought to be defrayed by a tax upon opinions."¹

Once war had been declared, military operations against France assumed a position of primary importance. Englishmen who supported France were no longer exercising their right to free speech: they could be flirting with treason. The Government, now more than ever, was on the lookout for possible seditious or treasonous behavior. To strengthen the King's proclamation on sedi-

¹ Morning Chronicle, February 21, 1793.

69
tion the Government carried through Parliament the Traitorous Correspondence Act. The *Times*, of course, approved of this bill designed to punish anyone who engaged in correspondence with parties who aimed at subverting the Constitution.²

The net cast by the Government against sedition and treason caught a radical barrister, John Frost, whose two trips to France had brought him to the Government's attention. Frost was brought before a grand jury and indicted for proclaiming he was for equality and opposed to kings, and in the subsequent trial the jury found him guilty of seditious utterances. Frost's fairly drastic sentence—six months in prison, an hour in the pillory at Charing Cross, and being stricken from the solicitor's list—was a measure of how far the Government was willing to go in suppressing the traditional free speech of Britons in the national emergency.³

A few months later, in August, 1793, Thomas Muir, another advocate, went on trial for promulgating seditious writings and speeches, and for promoting the circulation of Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man*. The proceedings were filled with irregularities, while the speeches of the prosecution and the judge bespoke an irrational fear and hatred of France. Muir admitted that he did favor a reform of Parliament, but denied that his writings and speeches were at all seditious. The Crown's case rested largely on evidence that Muir had recommended Paine's works. From the evidence presented, Muir had praised Paine's works with great reserve and had done far less than the Government's proclamation against sedition to advertise Paine's writings. But the Bench and jury were unanimous, and Muir was sentenced to fourteen years transportation. Parliamentary protests against the conduct of the trial and the

² *Times*, March 18, 1793.
questionable legality of such a draconic sentence for mere verbal sedition were unavailing. The Government had set another example in its prosecution for sedition.⁴

A major casualty of the tendency to equate criticism of the established order with sedition was the movement for Parliamentary reform which dated back to the Yorkshire Association movement of 1780. In the spring of 1793, thirty petitions for the reform of Parliament were presented before the House of Commons. Charles Grey, a Foxite Whig, presented a petition from the Friends of the People. The petition was based on a detailed report which exposed the corruption of electoral politics, the monopoly of borough owners, and the increase of taxation. Grey requested the House to consider the petitions in general.

In his speech, Grey avoided the radical argument of natural rights and argued instead from common sense. Grey pointed out that the disproportions between the number of representatives and the distribution of the population made it possible for less than 15,000 voters, or 1/200 of the adult population, to choose a majority in the House of Commons. Grey contended that a Parliament chosen by such an insignificant number of Britons could not possibly be adequately representative. He proposed that a committee recommend to the House a remedy for the grievances presented in the petition.⁵

William Pitt replied for the government by denouncing the reformers as "wicked persons", who aimed at subversion. For Pitt and his associates, subversion was the scare word of the day which could be used to stifle all opposition to the Government's policy. By imputation Grey and his friends

⁵ Cone, The English Jacobins, p. 163.
could be smeared as questionably loyal: while they did not themselves advocate universal suffrage, they proposed the consideration of petitions which did, and therefore they must believe in these Jacobinical principles. Identifying the reform impulse with revolutionary radicalism, Pitt attacked reform of any kind from mild to extreme. By appealing not to reason but to the anti-republican sympathies and prejudices of M.P.'s, Pitt secured the defeat of Grey's motion by an overwhelming 282-41. This majority demonstrated clearly that reform was, for the time, a dead issue in the House of Commons. It also demonstrated the inutility of the petitioning process, the only means of the disfranchised majority outside Parliament had of making itself heard. Radical reformers damned petitioning as ineffectual, and turned to other and more dangerous forms of protest.6

Since the petitions had proved ineffective, the London Corresponding Society and the Constitutional Society sought a new method to pursue reform. The societies decided to attend the Edinburgh Convention of October, 1793, which the Scottish reform societies had organized. Reform societies throughout England sent delegates to the Convention. The delegates made speeches on the importance of Parliamentary reform, but did not propose any plans for achieving their goal. The delegates' commitment to radical parliamentary reform, adoption of French revolutionary procedures and uncompromising defiance of established government alarmed Pitt's Ministry.

Scottish authorities closed the convention and although the Convention had never advocated overthrowing the government, several of its leading members, including William Skirving, Secretary to the Convention, Maurice Margarot, Chairman of the London Corresponding Society, and Joseph Gerrald, author of a popular pamphlet urging reform, were convicted of sedition and

6 Brown, The French Revolution in English History, pp. 102-03.
transported to Botany Bay. While the ideal of a national Convention to unite the diverse reform societies toward a common goal was a significant innovation, the radicals had seriously miscalculated the extent of popular support for their activities. Additionally, the societies underestimated the fears which the Convention would arouse among those in the Ministry.7

The onset of the Reign of Terror in France combined with the news of the Edinburgh Convention compelled the Government to increase its use of spies in the infiltration of the reform societies. Since late 1792 the Government had employed spies to keep the Crown informed of the associations' activities and gather evidence of any subversive actions. This use of spies was so widely known that John Horne Tooke, the leader of the Constitutional Society, began his address to a dinner meeting of the Society by asking his audience, especially "all spies present," to pay attention to his remarks. The spies supplied the Government with accurate, first-hand information, and few spies resorted to fabricating information to keep their taskmasters happy. The Government's use of spies was an indication of the insecurity felt by the ministers during the war against revolutionary France.8

The British Government was convinced that the reform societies—moderate as well as radical—posed a grave threat to law and order. The news that the Corresponding Society had determined on an English Convention, after the forced closing of the Edinburgh Convention, only strengthened their conviction. Rumors that some of the regional Corresponding Societies were arming their members with pikes caused the Government to decide to take offensive action against the leaders of the societies. On May 12, 1794, Thomas Hardy, leader of the London Corresponding Society, and Daniel Adams, Secretary of the

Constitutional Society, were arrested and all the papers in their homes relating to the societies were seized. Other arrests followed, including John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall, a Corresponding Society leader.

Pitt asked the House of Commons for a Committee of Secrecy to investigate the charges that these men intended to promote a Convention to subvert the Constitution and introduce French anarchy. As a member of the Committee, Pitt convinced the members that a "traitorous conspiracy" was afoot to destroy the legislature and to promote armed resistance to Parliamentary measures. The Committee issued a report to this effect and on its merits the Government asked for a special Act to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, and enable it to hold suspects in custody without further evidence. The Act to suspend Habeas Corpus was passed with overwhelming majorities on May 17.9

The Opposition, astounded by the Government's actions, likened the Committee of Secrecy to the French Committee of Public Safety. The *Morning Chronicle* asserted that the bill suspending Habeas Corpus was a "Bill to suspend the great constitutional guard of British liberty," the right to a trial.10 The Foxites could not stop the passage of the bill, but they would continue their defense of constitutional liberties in the House of Commons and at the State Trials.

The State Trials of the leaders of the reform societies took place in October and November, 1794, and resulted in a technical defeat for the Government. Thomas Erskine, a noted defense attorney and member of the Friends of the People, ably defended Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall. To Pitt's dismay, juries acquitted all three reformers, while charges against the other defendants were dropped by the courts, because the evidence

9 Ibid., pp. 118-19.
10 *Morning Chronicle*, May 17, 1794.
against these men was the same evidence that failed to convict Tooke. The Opposition papers, which had carried complete transcripts of the trials, celebrated the acquittals. The *Morning Chronicle* praised the juries for their discriminating minds which saw through the insubstantial evidence presented by the Crown. The *Chronicle* expressed its relief that the Government failed in its efforts to subvert the rights of Englishman.\(^\text{11}\)

The State Trails nearly succeeded in choking the reform movement. The two associations which had attracted middle class and aristocratic support were strangled; the Constitutional Society did not meet again, while the Friends of the People languished and died. The lower class and more radical Corresponding Society held together with difficulty and its membership dropped sharply during the trials. The acquittals, however, brought in more members and economic pressures in 1795 served to swell the ranks even further. The London Corresponding Society assumed the leadership of a popular movement, and pursued its twin aims of Parliamentary reform and peace through public agitation.\(^\text{12}\)

One discerning American observer of events in Britain in 1794 and 1795 was John Jay, who had arrived in England in June, 1794 to negotiate an end to all disputed issues between the United States and Great Britain. Deteriorating relations between the two nations and an attempted insurrection, possibly instigated by the pro-French Democratic-Republican societies,\(^\text{13}\) in western America convinced Washington that his country was facing war. After putting down the insurrection, Washington hoped to ease tensions between Britain and America through negotiation.

\(^{11}\) *Morning Chronicle*, November 8, 1794.


\(^{13}\) This insurrection, better known as the Whiskey Rebellion is discussed below, p. 74-75.
The strained relations between the United States and Great Britain had developed in part from neither country's complying with all the terms of the Treaty of 1783. Americans lavishly celebrated their independence with yearly July 4th festivities which featured extravagantly anti-British rhetoric. Understandably nettled, the British also resented the enthusiasm with which Americans aped the dress, white cockade and forms of address from Revolutionary France. George Hammond, British minister to the United States, continually protested the conduct of Citizen Genet to the State Department, seldom receiving any satisfaction.

British scorn for America, suspected by hyper-sensitive colonials at all levels of society, was especially galling when exhibited by British sailors in American ports. Americans who imitated English customs or dress were ridiculed in the Republican press, and criticism of all things English became a favorite method of combatting possible British influence in the United States. Alleged corruption in Britain's government and the pomposity of George III were common topics for commentary, and provided a constant irritant to the British. With the continuing division of American politics into a two-party system, the Republicans condemned the Federalists for being a mere tool of the British monarchy—a charge the Federalists had great trouble disproving.

During the spring of 1794 anti-British feeling in America was at a peak. The Orders in Council of 1793 had further antagonized Americans by authorizing the detention of neutral ships carrying provisions to France and the "purchase" by Britain of these provisions for her own use. Another order decreed the seizure of all vessels which attempted to trade with the French West Indies. Implicit in these orders was the potential destruction of American trade.14

14 Morning Chronicle, December 28, 1794; and Times, December 28, 1794.
Congress replied to the orders with a temporary embargo: all ships were forbidden to leave American harbors for any foreign port for a month. This restriction was extended for another month when the first embargo expired, but instead of bringing England to her knees, it almost succeeded in extinguishing America's foreign commerce, as all business along the eastern seaboard virtually ceased.15

The decline of American commerce hurt farmers on the western frontier, who had entered 1794 indignant over an excise tax on the distillation of their grain into whiskey, continued British support of Indian raids on their settlements, and the government's refusal to declare war on Spain to open the Mississippi. Illogically, westerners declined to blame their own government for its part in their difficulties and, although well known for their inability to unite on any issue, they formed the Democratic-Republican Societies as an ideal vehicle for frontier unification against the traditional enemy—Britain.

The Democratic-Republican Societies combined a hatred for England with ardent republicanism and a love of France. The societies organized in 1793 and sought to channel enthusiasm for the French Revolution into the Republican cause at home. The most influential society was the Democratic Society of Pennsylvania. Originating in Philadelphia, this society sent its circular throughout the country, asserting that should France be defeated by the "European Confederacy," America would be the "only depository of liberty" and would not be allowed to enjoy peace. The "constant circulation of useful information, and a liberal communication of republican sentiments" were the best antidotes to political poisons, such as aristocratic leanings and arrogance of power.16

The societies spread quickly throughout America, partly because the Orders in Council gave the societies increased popularity among more moderate Americans. A broad base of membership included farmers, artisans, sailors, mechanics, merchants, landowners and politicians. The inclusion of the so-called "lower order" of society worried Hamiltonian Federalists, as much as the Corresponding Societies were vexing the Pittite politicians at the same time in England. Both groups saw the troublesome societies as akin to the Jacobin Clubs. The role the societies played in the Whiskey Rebellion in July, 1794 convinced conservative Americans that they were a menace to the government.17

Congress' vote to increase the hated excise tax sparked the Rebellion among Americans who were as little inclined to pay taxes to an American government as they had been to pay them to a British government in the 1760's. The Democratic societies, which had been busy denouncing Washington's selection of Jay as envoy to Britain, took over the active opposition to the excise. Collectors of the tax were warned, then tarred and feathered, while men who obeyed the law and paid the tax found their stills riddled with bullets. The Mingo Creek militia marched on Pittsburgh with the avowed intention of driving all who supported the tax out of Pennsylvania.

The news of the disturbances caused serious alarm in Philadelphia, and exaggeration made the entire country appear ripe for rebellion. Sober-minded citizens called for vigorous measures against the rebels and Washington resolved to suppress the insurrection, thereby demonstrating the strength of the new national government.

Washington published a proclamation commanding the "Whiskey Boys" to

17 Ibid., p. 91.
desist, and requisitioned a militia from New Jersey, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland. The militia, designed to overawe, not to fight, mustered and marched to western Pennsylvania, where they rendezvoused with Washington and Hamilton near Bedford. A conference held in Pittsburgh ended the insurrection, with thousands of citizens in the west swearing allegiance to the government. Hundreds of the insurgents were arrested and the chief offenders sent to Philadelphia, where all but two were acquitted of the charge of treason, and these two were later pardoned by the President.\textsuperscript{18}

Perhaps the principal effect of the Whiskey Rebellion was the demise of the Democratic Societies. Washington saw them as the "fomenters of the western disturbances" who had been "labouring incessantly to sow the seeds of distrust, jealousy and, of course, discontent."\textsuperscript{19} The Atlantic seaboard Democratic societies sought to minimize the damage by deploring the rebels' actions and insisting that any change in the excise tax should be brought about by constitutional measures. The Democratic Society of Philadelphia published its approval of the "mild and prudent" action of the President and the Governor of Pennsylvania in putting down the rebellion.\textsuperscript{20} However, the violence in the west caused the more moderate participants in the societies to resign their membership. The societies continued into the 1800's, but their widespread appeal was irrevocably damaged by the Whiskey Rebellion.

John Jay, in Britain trying to negotiate a treaty, welcomed the successful suppression of the rebellion. Jay wrote Washington that the American Government's quick action increased Britain's respect for the United States.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{18} The above discussion of the Whiskey Rebellion is taken from accounts in Schachner, \textit{The Founding Fathers}, pp. 322-23; and McMaster, \textit{A History of the People of the United States}, pp. 189-206.

\textsuperscript{19} George Washington to John Jay, November 1, 1794, Johnston, ed., \textit{Jay Correspondence}, vol. 4, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Gazette of the United States}, November 5, 1794.
Jay considered his task difficult enough without a continuing insurrection indicating a weakness in the American government which the British would be ready to exploit. Jay went to England with few delusions regarding his task. He wrote that he brought with him a "fixed opinion, that no treaty whatever with Great Britain would escape a partial but violent opposition." Jay also realized that he had little chance of succeeding fully in carrying out his instructions. Unbeknownst to Jay, Hamilton had divulged the scope of Jay’s instructions to Hammond, the British minister, and assured Hammond that America would not join Sweden and Denmark in a pact of armed neutrality.

Thanks to Hamilton’s interference and his own determination to bring back a treaty, the terms of Jay’s Treaty were less than spectacular but, were the best available to him negotiating as he did from a position of weakness. Great Britain would evacuate the western posts; citizens and Indians of both nations were given the right of free passage in each others’ territories and the right of free navigation of all waters; all pre-Revolutionary debts to the British which had become uncollectable would be paid by the United States government; American ships were given the right to carry American goods to the British West Indies, but only in ships the size of a small fishing smack; and, Britain was accorded the right to declare foodstuffs and provisions a contraband of war and to seize them on payment of the purchase price to the original owners. The treaty gave America very little, but it did promise to bring peace to the country and avert a possibly disastrous war with Britain. Jay, aware to the deficiencies of the treaty, wrote: "If this treaty fails, I despair of another."
Jay's Treaty, which did not even conform with the instructions given Jay before he left, arrived in America and was instantly shrouded in secrecy to prevent it from creating the expected furor in the country. To abjure the treaty and begin new negotiations would not only admit that the administration's policy was ineffective, but could also lead to war with Britain. Washington called the Senate into special session to deal with the difficulties presented by the treaty.

The Senate considered the treaty on partisan terms: the Federalists were determined to ratify it while the Republicans were equally intent on rejection. After nine days of debate the Senate ratified the treaty, but excluded the twelfth article concerning West Indies trade. The treaty then went to the President for his signature.

Before Washington could sign the treaty, its provisions were leaked to Benjamin Franklin Bache, editor of the Republican Aurora, by Senator Stevens Thomson Mason of Virginia. Almost overnight protests against the treaty were heard throughout America. At a town meeting held in Boston, the treaty was read aloud and debated. Bache urged other towns to follow Boston's example so that "the people might express their disapprobation in the strongest manner of an instrument which reflects dishonor on America, and barters away her best interests and her dearest rights." Heeding Bache's advice, people at rallies across the country read the treaty, condemned it and burned Jay in effigy.

The Republican press had a field day with Jay's Treaty. While the Federalist Gazette of the United States dissected the treaty article by article and printed both sides of the debate, the Republican papers, led by the Aurora, contented themselves with attacking the treaty and its negotiator. Some

---

24 Aurora, July 14, 1795.
25 Gazette of the United States, July - September, 1795.
Republican papers hoped to cajole or threaten Washington into not signing the treaty. When Washington did sign, the press shifted their attacks to include him. Republican journals insisted the treaty ignored American interests and could possibly provoke retaliation from France. Far from avoiding a war, these papers insisted, Jay’s Treaty succeeded in making a two-front conflict possible.26

Defenders of the treaty were few and far between. Merchants and businessmen in the major cities supported the treaty and sent messages detailing their approval to Washington. Alexander Hamilton, as “Camillus”, defended Jay’s efforts in a series of articles carried by the majority of Federalist and Republican newspapers. Hamilton asserted that the treaty’s critics were aggrieved solely because their plans to drag America into war with Britain, and consequently onto France’s side, had been spoiled by the establishment of peace between Britain and America.27 The clamor over Jay’s Treaty diminished somewhat after the arrival of the treaty negotiated by Thomas Pinckney with Spain, which was extremely favorable to America and included the long-sought-after freedom to navigate the Mississippi River. Significantly, Pinckney’s Treaty satisfied the disgruntled Americans of the western territory and ended their threat of secession.

For Britain, the Jay Treaty neutralized the threat of the United States joining the war on France’s side. Britain gave up little in the treaty and did not modify her conduct regarding the search and seizure of neutral ships. In fact, while the treaty was being debated in the United States Senate, the British government issued secret instructions to its ships of war to seize all vessels

26 For a detailed analysis of the response of the Republican press, see Stewart, The Opposition Press, pp. 200-231.
laden with corn bound for France or ports under French control. Britain continued to use every method available to gain ground in her battle against Republican France.

In October, 1795 an attack on the King in his coach on the way to the opening of Parliament induced the Government to bring into Parliament two acts to restore order. The Treasonable Practices Act redefined treason: anyone who attempted to incite people to hatred of the King, his government, or the constitution by either speech or writing was guilty of treason. To control public gatherings, the Seditious Meetings Act prohibited meetings of more than fifty people except under license of the local magistrate and under his control.28

These acts, known as "the Two Acts," did not receive the support that the earlier measures against sedition had enjoyed. William Wilberforce, the leader of the campaign against the slave trade and a powerful independent voice in the House, led the Government supporters who expressed their doubts about these acts, but decided to support the measures as a temporary sacrifice brought about by the necessity of maintaining peace in Britain. Referring to the acts as "the two bills for the destruction of British liberty," Foxite Whigs and radicals joined forces to protest the bills. County meetings were organized and, as a result, petitions opposing the bills poured into Parliament.29 Despite this public protest, the Ministry's hold on a Parliament which accurately reflected the consensus of informed public opinion, was sufficient to secure passage of the acts, which received royal assent by December 18, 1795.

But even as Parliament debated the acts of 1795, the internal threat to Britain from Republican France had lessened considerably owing to the fall of Robespierre in July, 1794. The French executive committees demonstrated

28 Morning Chronicle, November 5, 1795; and Gentlemen's Magazine, February, 1796.
29 Morning Chronicle, November 24, 26, 7, December 7, 1795.
their policy of moderation by disavowing the Jacobin Clubs and their doctrine of extending the Revolution beyond France's borders. Britain and France were still at war but, for the moment, the threat of internal subversion by French agents diminished. The Two Acts were directed against the radical reform societies which had been experiencing a steady growth throughout 1795 owing to food shortages and an increasingly popular desire for peace. The Two Acts indicated Pitt's continued concern about the reform movement and his determination to extinguish the societies and protect the constitution.

Calls for peace, present since the start of the war, increased in 1795-1797. The financial measures enacted by the Government to meet the ever-increasing costs of the war touched almost everyone in Britain. Taxes and levies were placed on tea, wine and spirits, tobacco, horses, sugar, and calico cloth, an article of almost universal consumption. A bad harvest in 1794 was followed by a spring frost which damaged the blooming wheat, causing high food prices in 1795. The usual consequence in the 18th century now occurred; bread riots broke out in a number of towns. The stone thrown at King George's carriage, which triggered the Two Acts, came from somewhere in a crowd which had congregated to demand bread and an end to the war.

Throughout the remainder of 1795 and during all of 1796 demands for peace were linked to the high price of food and increasing taxes. The reform societies organized large open air meetings which sent petitions to the King and Parliament, as well as addresses to the nation at large, asking for peace, annual parliaments and universal suffrage. The high price of food was attributed to the war and included as a reason why the petitions should be granted. The meetings were conducted in an orderly manner and broke up without any disturbance of the peace, a fact noted in both Government and Opposition papers.30

---

30 Morning Chronicle, November 3, December 9, 1795; Gentlemen's Magazine, April, 1795;
The calls for peace and petition drives continued into 1797. A mutiny among sailors at Spithead highlighted the discontent that was simmering below the surface throughout Britain. The mutineers asked for fair wages, sufficient food of decent quality, better medical care, and some shore leave at the end of a voyage. The Government acceded to their demands and the King pardoned the actions of the mutineers. Then an even more violent mutiny erupted at the Nore, the large naval base near Rochester which guarded sea access to the capital, in which the sailors involved threatened to blockade the Thames. Government forces quickly suppressed the mutiny and hanged the leader, a sailor named Richard Parker. As a result of the mutinies, a bill was rushed through Parliament which made it a capital offense to encourage mutiny in the armed forces. The mutiny was almost universally condemned in the British press, as even the Opposition papers, led by the *Morning Chronicle*, announced their approval of the bill to discourage further mutiny.31

These challenges to order and a widespread feeling of malaise put the British government on the defensive throughout 1797. An attempt to negotiate peace with France failed due to the French *coup d'état* of Fructidor. Prussia and Austria succeeded in their peace negotiations, while Spain joined the war on France's side. The Opposition chose 1797 for another attempt to secure reform measures. Charles Grey again introduced the resolutions, which proposed a uniform household franchise for boroughs, the substitution of more county members for corrupt borough nominees, and triennial parliaments. Pitt maintained that the situation of Britain was too critical to be thinking of reform, and the measure was easily defeated. Fox, Grey and their supporters, 91 in number, seceded from Parliament and for the next three years, in the

31 *Morning Chronicle*, April - June, 1797.
absence of the Foxite Whigs, no consistent opposition to the Ministry existed.\(^{32}\)

Britain was not alone in facing mounting difficulties in 1797. The United States was confronted by a deteriorating relationship with France, caused in part by the Jay Treaty. France regarded the treaty as a hostile act, while America's decision to pursue neutrality instead of offering unwavering support had irritated the French leaders, who chose to view Jay's Treaty as an abandonment of neutrality and a move to embrace the enemy, Great Britain. The United States protested that the treaty did not, in any way, nullify or contradict the American-French agreements, but the French executive committee could not be placated.

A seemingly trivial incident in Congress caused further hard feelings between the two nations. James Monroe, minister to France, had given an American flag to the French government in the name of the American people. The government voted to hang the French and American colors intertwined in their assembly hall. In return the Committee of Public Safety sent the French flag to the Congress of the United States. Minister Adet presented this flag to President Washington on New Year's Day, 1796, hinting that both flags should be intertwined in Congress. Washington thanked him for the flag, consulted his advisors and decided that the French flag should reside in the national archives.

Upon discovering the placement of his country's flag, Adet sent a formal protest to Secretary of State Pickering. Adet stated that this shutting up of the flag was a mark of indifference, or contempt, toward France and he demanded that the flag be released. Pickering advised Adet that the flag would continue to rest in the archives with other memorials to America's fight for freedom and would be in good company. The flag remained shut up, but French sensibilities

were wounded.

In 1796 President Washington decide to retire at the end of his second term. The fight over Jay's Treaty and the barbs thrown at him by the Republican press had worn out a President already fatigued by the business of office and anxious to return to Mount Vernon. As he left office, Washington wanted to address the people of the United States, and warn them of what might occur if the opposing forces did not work together for the good of the nation.

Washington's Farewell Address, written with the aid of Hamilton and Jay, was printed in the American press in September.33

In his address, Washington, thinking of the tensions that relations with both Britain and France had raised in America, warned against "permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations and passionate attachments for others." America was cautioned to "steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world"; advice that would be followed for almost two hundred years. Sensing the growing spirit of sectionalism, Washington urged Americans to guard against party passions and "designing men" who sought to create an impression that "there is a real difference of local interests and views" based on geographical distribution. Only "Government for the whole" can give power and permanency to the United States. "The spirit of party" served only to "distract the public councils and enfeeble the public administration."34

Washington used his address to warn America about what he believed the two main dangers to the future were: foreign entanglements and political parties. Although we now recognize the Farewell Address as one of the classics of American political literature, Washington's words created little impression

34 Aurora, September 20, 21, 1796.
on a public more interested in watching the parties: the Federalist and Republicans were gearing themselves up for the coming election.

For the first time, the election of 1796 pitted the two opposing parties against each other: John Adams, a Federalist, faced Thomas Jefferson, a Republican. The American press gleefully joined in the campaigns. Adams was accused of being a staunch monarchist who would bring on a war with France. Jefferson's election "must eventuate either in the debasement of the American name, by a whimsical, inconsistent and feeble administration, or in the prostration of the United States at the feet of France."35

In the electoral system of the time the candidate receiving the most electoral votes became President; the holder of second place became Vice President. By the end of December all the votes had been counted: Adams had received 71 votes to Jefferson's 68. Madison hoped that the closeness of the election would cause the Federalists to temper their policies. Adams expressed his wish that Jefferson's political beliefs might be altered by presiding over the Senate, "an excellent school" in Adam's eyes.

America's troubles with France did not wait for the new chief executive to take office. In October, 1796, the American government received word that the French Directory had decided to institute a policy of search and seizure of neutral ships. Pickering advised the French that Treaty of 1778 precluded her from seizing provision ships. France replied by stating that if the treaty were still in effect, then its terms must be adhered to in every respect, by both sides. Therefore, the Jay Treaty must be rescinded, since its provisions contradicted the Treaties of 1778, before the seizures would stop. The actions of the new French government surprised even the Republicans. Madison feared that the

---

35 *Gazette of the United States*, the "Phocion" letters, published from mid-October through early December, 1796.
seizures might lead to permanent alienation from France.\textsuperscript{36}

While relations between America and France worsened after 1795, relations between America and Britain improved slightly. Americans were becoming less enamored of France and more protective of their status as neutrals. If the British seizures of neutral ships was illegal, so was that of France. Having diffused the worst of the United States' animosity with the Jay Treaty, the Government in Britain concentrated its energy on the prosecution of the war against France and the successful suppression of the perceived threat from the reform societies at home. As Britain faced the possibility of invasion with limitation of traditional liberties, and America dealt with the violations of her neutral rights, the outlook for the future appeared gloomy for both nations.

\textsuperscript{36} Schachner, \textit{The Founding Fathers}, p. 413.
"The times that try men's souls" had arrived in both Britain and the United States by 1797. Britain continued her fight against Revolutionary France, plagued by food riots, reform societies, a developing working-class radical movement and rebellion among the Irish. America faced the probability of fighting a war against her old ally, while a large portion of her population remained uncritically admiring of her soon-to-be enemy. Neither Prime Minister Pitt nor President Adams looked forward to the upcoming year.

In late 1796 the troubled relationship between the United States and her old ally became a diplomatic crisis of the first magnitude when James Monroe had to be recalled for behavior unbecoming an envoy. President Washington had appointed Monroe, a Republican and staunch friend of France, to replace Gouverneur Morris whose unconcealed disdain for the infant republic and aid to victims of revolutionary justice had led the French government to demand his recall. From the moment of his arrival in France, Monroe's impulsive and imprudent behavior embarassed his government, and angered his President. Not content to wait for his formal presentation to the Committee of Public Safety, Monroe made an impromptu address before the entire French Convention, during which he lavishly praised France's military might and republican form of government. Monroe's exuberant speech earned him instant popularity within France but a sharp rebuke from Secretary of State Randolph at home.
The uproar over the exchanged flags\(^1\) closely followed on the heels of Monroe’s speech, causing the neutral United States further embarrassment. Monroe’s subsequent inability to calm French ire over the Jay Treaty and his apologetic requests for compensation on behalf of American merchants whose ships had been seized by the French caused most of Washington’s Cabinet to question his fitness for office. Monroe’s folly culminated with his harboring Thomas Paine while Paine penned a vindictive, public letter to George Washington, in which he called the President a hypocrite and a false friend.

Washington, stung by Paine’s letter and out of patience with his minister, summarily recalled Monroe and appointed Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a level-headed Federalist, in Monroe’s stead. Pinckney arrived in Paris shortly after news of Monroe’s recall reached France and received a frigid reception. The Directory notified Pinckney that no minister from the United States would be received until the grievances France had complained of regarding the Treaties of 1778 and Jay’s Treaty were redressed. The Directory handed Pinckney an official order of departure, his passports and a safe-conduct pass, and Pinckney left France with his family to seek refuge in Amsterdam. The expulsion of Pinckney strained already tense relations between the two republics to the breaking point.\(^2\)

On March 4, 1797, John Adams took the oath of office as the second President of the United States. Washington, who attended the inaugural ceremonics and received a thunderous ovation from the crowd, appeared relieved that the burdens of office would now fall on Adams’s rather broad shoulders. Of the myriad problems facing the new Chief Executive, probably the most serious was the continued French seizures of American ships. Secre-

\(^1\) see above, p. 86.
tary of State Thomas Pickering estimated that between October, 1796 and June, 1797 France had taken 316 American ships, while Britain had seized two during the same period. New York merchants wryly reflected that while the British depredations against American ships would eventually be recompensed, French spoliations never would. News of the Directory's refusal to receive Pinckney, coupled with a report that the French had decreed the hanging of any American seaman found on a captured British ship, whether his presence was voluntary or not, caused a growing number of Americans to consider war as a means of chastising the French for their behavior.3

To deal with the complex problems facing America, President Adams called a special session of Congress in May, 1797. He addressed Congress at length on the state of relations with France, emphasizing the French seizure of American ships, the threat against the lives of impressed seamen and the Directory's refusal to receive Pinckney. To secure the defense of America, the President urged Congress to increase the army and navy, implement convoys to protect America's merchant ships, and allow the merchant ships to arm themselves. Reaction to the speech predictably followed party lines, as Federalists applauded these measures, and Republicans called Adams's address an unnecessary irritant to France.4

Congress proceeded to debate Adams's proposals, with the Republicans setting themselves firmly against his defensive recommendations. A bill passed by the Federalist controlled Senate to increase the navy had its provisions chipped away one after the other by the Republican House. While the debate raged, Adams himself took a decisive step toward peace. He submitted to the Senate the names of Charles C. Pinckney, Elbridge Gerry and John Marshall as

---

4 Aurora, May 19, 1797.
envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary to France. Adams hoped that these men would be received by the Directory and could negotiate an end to the disagreements between America and her sister republic. The three envoys were quickly confirmed by a Senate still eager to avoid a war for which the United States was far from ready. Marshall and Gerry sailed to meet Pinckney in Amsterdam, so that the three envoys arrived in Paris together in October, 1797. Congress and most of America shelved the debate on military preparedness and settled back to wait for news of the triumvirate’s negotiations.

What seemed like an inordinately long time passed before word of her envoys reached home in March, 1798. The length of time between the arrival of the envoys and the receipt of their dispatches caused many concerned Americans to believe that the administration was keeping news of the messages a secret. Ex-President Washington asked Secretary of War McHenry: "Are our Commissioners guillotined, or what else is the occasion of their silence?" Washington’s sardonic question mirrored the Administration’s pessimism over the possible outcome of the envoys’ mission, for France had recently had yet another change of government and the Directory’s new rulers were decidedly anti-American. However the American ministers’ long silence occurred mainly because the dispatches sent to America had to travel a circuitous route to prevent their falling into unfriendly hands. The first dispatch was written on October 22, 1797 and others followed on a regular basis, with the last dispatch dated January 8, 1798. All of them reached Secretary of State Pickering in a single diplomatic packet on March 4, 1798.

President Adams informed Congress of the receipt of the packet on the morning after its arrival. The ministers had cautiously followed diplomatic

---

5 Gazette of the United States, November 23, 1797
procedure so that almost all of the dispatches required some decoding. The final communique which contained the news of the Directory's decree ordering the capture of all neutral ships bound with goods for Britain and her colonies, required no decoding. This news was enough in itself to create a state of alarm in Congress. The members of both Houses realized that if this startling news was relayed in plain English, the contents of the coded messages must indeed be earthshaking.

Once decoded the dispatches revealed a sordid picture of bribery, corruption and threats. Three Frenchmen, agents of the Directory's foreign minister Talleyrand, had met with the American envoys, and demanded a loan for France and a bribe for French officials before they would even consent to negotiate with the Americans. When asked for a response to these terms, Pinckney had answered for the Americans by shouting: "It is no; no; not a sixpence!" Details of this extraordinary proposition were quickly encoded and sent on their long journey to America. Marshall and Pinckney left Paris, while Gerry, disobeying the President's instructions that the three ministers should act in concert, remained in the vain hope that he could achieve a treaty of some sort with the recalcitrant French.

Reviewing the volatile contents of the dispatches, President Adams and his Cabinet agreed that a full disclosure of the documents to the nation would raise such an outcry that the United States would be propelled into an immediate and possibly disastrous war. Adams decided to deliver a message to Congress, disclosing none of the contents of the dispatches, but stating that he was satisfied that the peace efforts had failed because the Directory again had refused to meet with America's ministers. In his speech Adams also repeated his previous recommendations for defensive measures and added that owing to the new French decree he would allow merchant ships to arm themselves for their own

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
The Republicans and their press immediately took to the offensive upon hearing the President's message. They judged Adams guilty of saber-rattling and warmongering; his address was nothing less that an open declaration of war. The *Aurora* wanted to know if Adams intended to override Congress and declare war himself. "Centinel" asked if Americans should "stand in hostile array against the French Republic" because of the "vain ambition of one man," a pro-British President who hoped to further the aims of British agents in America.8 In an action that would be unthinkable today, Republican leader Thomas Jefferson, Vice President of the United States, called President Adams's message "insane" and urged Congress to pass legislation to prohibit the arming of merchant ships. Hoping to embarrass the Federalists, the Republican press demanded to know why the dispatches had not been released. Was it possible that the contents would not support the President's statement and, instead, would show that France was ready to negotiate. The concerns raised by the major Republican papers were echoed in papers across America and calls for publication began to urge members of Congress to assert their Constitutional right and demand publication.

The House of Representatives, determined not to be put off by any further Presidential excuses, voted to demand the communiques. The day after he received Congress's demand, President Adams presented both the House and Senate with a copy of the dispatches. The copies were complete except for the deletion of the names of Talleyrand's agents, whom Adams referred to as X, Y and Z. As he handed over the copies Adams cautioned Congress to think care-

---


8 *Aurora*, March 20, 21, 1798.
fully of the possible consequences before they decided to publish the documents.

The House and Senate studied the contents of the envoys' messages intently. The Republicans were shocked to discover that the President, in his speech to Congress, had actually softened the seriousness of the situation and the outrageousness of the French demands. The House Republicans, who held a slim majority over the Federalists, quickly assessed the situation and pushed through a vote not to publish. The Senate, with its Federalist majority that did not intend to let the Republicans off so easily, voted to publish the dispatches, and incidentally enjoy the Republicans' embarrassment.

An incredulous public's response to the documents' publication was almost instantaneous. A tremendous wave of resentment and anger against the French swept across the United States. How dare the Directory refuse to receive the representatives of a friendly nation! How could the Directory imagine that America would give into their demand for a "loan" that was no more that a forced tribute? Petitions, resolutions and offers of support were printed in papers throughout the United States and sent to the President. These addresses praised the "pure motives" and "clear perceptions" of the President. French actions were condemned: "the conduct and designs of the French Republic . . . are such as to produce alarm and indignation in every breast which feels for the honor and happiness of America . . . "

The Republican press printed the XYZ papers with little comment. A few papers, borrowing an excuse made public by Jefferson, suggested that the Directory knew nothing about Talleyrand's propositions. In their floundering

---

9 *Gazette of the United States*, May 16, 1798. The dispatches, details of the XYZ Affair, comments, petitions and addresses appear in the Federalist press throughout April, May and June, 1798.

10 *Gazette of the United States*, April 28, 1798.
attempts to explain away the actions of the three French agents the Republican press sounded shrill and outlandish. The *Aurora* and the New York *Time Piece* tried to show that X, Y and Z were not French agents, but rather were enemies of the Republic attempting to force America into a war with France. The petitions supporting President Adams's actions were attacked as unrepresentative because they had been signed by "lawyers, merchants, children [to pad the list], refugees, tories and Englishmen."\(^{11}\)

The XYZ Affair, on top of the French ship seizures, made war with France seem inevitable to many concerned Americans. Congress passed acts suspending all commercial intercourse between the two nations; and, granting merchant ships the right to arm and to defend themselves against all search and seizure attempts. Congress also authorized American naval vessels to seize French warships and privateers encountered anywhere on the high seas. On land, volunteer militia units formed throughout the nation and readied themselves to march to war if called on. These preparations for war alarmed many Republicans who opposed war against France for any reason, but they were unable to stop the Congressional and local measures; anti-French feelings ran too high.

An undeclared naval war between the United States and France began in July, 1798 and continued until September, 1800. During that time America's small navy captured eighty-five armed French vessels and fought one-on-one battles with French warships. With common sense and rationality suspended for war, great credence was given to reports that Jacobin-inspired groups, such as the Democratic-Republican Societies, plotted to overthrow the American government. The responsibility for the outbreak of a fire in Philadelphia was attributed to a group of Republicans who were helping some recent French

\(^{11}\) *Aurora*, May 19, 1798.
emigres adjust to life in America. In the Federalists' minds anyway, the surviving Democratic Societies had combined with French refugees to subvert the Constitution and turn the government of America over to mob rule. As far-fetched as the idea seems today, enough people were convinced of the possibility of a Jacobin revolt to clamour for Congress to pass measures to protect the government. Congress itself became convinced enough of the threat to pass four bills—the Naturalization Act, the Alien Friends Act, the Alien Enemies Act and the Sedition Act.

The Naturalization Act extended an immigrant's period of residence before citizenship from five to fourteen years. This bill, actually aimed at the Irish immigrants who represented a large portion of the support of the Republican Party, was a Federalist device to chip away some of their opposition's strength. The Alien Act empowered the President to order out of the country any alien that he believed presented a dangerous threat to the security of the government. The Sedition Act called for the arrest and trial of anyone who spoke or published anything false, scandalous or malicious about Congress or the President. Also the Act made a Federal offense, utterances designed to excite "unlawful combinations" to oppose or resist laws or acts of the President. The authors of the Sedition Act borrowed heavily from Britain's proclamation against sedition and the Two Acts; a fact that did not escape the notice of the Republicans, and which eventually rendered the acts, however necessary, a rallying point for the opposition.

President Adams never invoked the Alien Act or deported any aliens. The administration, however, vigorously enforced the Sedition Act and targeted the editors of the Republican press. Less restrained members of this press had provoked the Federalists and the President beyond the point of toleration. Personal attacks, innuendos and outright calls to armed insurrection rolled off the Repub-
lican presses. The *Aurora* linked the 1798 spread of yellow fever to the Federalists' program of preparedness when it asked that since the administration had decided to plunge the United States from peace and prosperity to the brink of war and misery, was it any wonder heaven afflicted the nation "from Boston to Philadelphia with pestilence and calamity?" The *Independent Chronicle* charged that the "Tories" of Congress and Adams's administration could not "conceal their joy at having produced an open rupture between the two Republics." The Republican press universally charged that the Federalists wished to place America in a servile position to her former master, and the defense of French actions and constant criticism of the President verged on treason. The editors of less virulent Republican papers refrained from the most personal of attacks, and concentrated on guarding Americans' Constitutional liberties.

Attorney General Charles Lee, prosecuted twenty-five men for sedition, including John Daly Burk of the New York *Time Piece*, Benjamin Franklin Bache of the *Aurora*, Abijah Adams of Boston's *Independent Chronicle*, Congressman Matthew Lyon of Vermont, author James Thompson Callender and teacher/scientist Thomas Cooper. Republicans, comparing Adams to Robespierre, denounced the prosecutions as a "reign of terror." They charged that all legal safeguards found in common law and the Constitution were ignored by Federalist judges and packed juries. Republicans contended that the Sedition Act threatened all Americans, since only specific officials were selected for protection; for example, Vice-President Jefferson had no recourse from attacks by the Federalist press under the Act.

12 *Aurora*, September 3, 1798. The yellow fever epidemic killed the editor of the *Aurora*, Benjamin Franklin Bache, shortly after the publication of this editorial.
13 *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), July 16, 1798.
14 See Stewart, The Opposition *P.*ess, pp. 305-13 for further examples. The *Aurora's* circulation dropped sharply in the aftermath of the XYZ Affair, partly due to the extreme nature of the attacks on the administration.
Jefferson himself considered the Alien and Sedition Acts "an experiment on the American mind, to see how far it will bear an avowed violation of the Constitution." Jefferson joined with Madison to register the formal Republican protest to the Acts. Jefferson's provocative Kentucky and Madison's milder Virginia Resolutions blasted the detested Acts. The Resolutions explored the nature of a federal compact and went to the heart of the issues that would culminate in the secession of the Southern States in 1861. The states had, the Resolutions asserted, the right to band together to declare the Acts unconstitutional. The Kentucky Resolutions, auguring John C. Calhoun's *South Carolina Exposition and Protest* of 1828, advanced the idea that the states could nullify an Act of Congress, after giving Congress an opportunity to withdraw the protested Act. But the Virginia Resolutions more cautiously asserted only the right of the states to maintain "unimpaired the authorities, rights and liberties reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." 

Copies of the Resolutions were printed and widely distributed throughout the United States. The sentiments expressed in the Resolutions received a guardedly favorable response from Republican and some moderate Americans, who considered the Sedition Act a threat to their freedom of speech. Further, the victory of Britain's Admiral Nelson at Aboukir Bay helped to calm fears of a French invasion of America. As this menace receded more Americans reconsidered the possibly greatened dangers to their Constitutional liberties posed by the Sedition Act. Arrests and trials under the Sedition Act continued throughout 1799 and 1800, despite increased public protests. The election of Thomas Jefferson to the Presidency finally stopped the prosecutions.

---

16 Both sides of the press printed the Kentucky Resolutions in December, 1798 and January, 1799 and the Virginia Resolutions in January, 1799.
17 President Jefferson pardoned those already convicted and stopped the ongoing proceedings against those already indicted but still awaiting trial.
Early in 1799 President Adams had taken steps to avoid the apparently impending war with France. Peace feelers from the Directory had reached Adams through Elbridge Gerry, William Vans Murray and Dr. George Logan. Dr. Logan, a Republican Quaker concerned about the state of relations between America and France, undertook a private peace mission. Armed only with letters of introduction from Thomas Jefferson and Thomas McKean, chief justice of Pennsylvania he went to France and managed, with the help of the Batavian minister, to meet with important members of the French government, including Talleyrand and Merlin, chief of the Directory. Logan returned to America carrying an olive branch given him by the Directory—an arrêt which liberated all captured American seamen and lifted the embargo on American ships. Naturally enough the Adams administration viewed Logan’s private diplomacy as interference in their conduct of American policy, and Secretary of State Pickering stiffly informed Logan that "the government does not thank you for what you have done." President Adams listened politely to what Logan had to report and then informed him that while the French government might profess itself ready to receive an American minister if that minister were James Madison or George Logan, he did not intend to allow anyone to dictate the choice of minister for him.18

Beset on all sides with Federalists demanding war, raucous Republicans clamoring for renewed relations with France, and his bellicosity undermined by French peace feelers, Adams determined to try one more time for peace. He surprised both Federalists and Republicans by declaring his intention to send yet another embassy to France to negotiate an end to the disagreements between the two nations. The Federalists, eager to continue the war, were

18 Deborah N. Logan, Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton (Philadelphia: n.p., 1899), pp 79-86.
outraged, the Republicans suspicious. An uncharacteristically thick-skinned Adams ignored the criticism of both sides and dispatched the mission. Oliver Ellsworth, Chief Justice of the United States and William R. Davie, Governor of North Carolina, left America in November, 1799 to join William Vans Murray, Minister to The Hague, to negotiate an accord with the new French leader, Napoleon Bonaparte.

Events in France now conspired to help Adams’s peace initiative; hardly had the Senate confirmed the three new envoys when a *coup d'etat* in France placed Napoleon at the head of the new French government, the Consular Republic. Napoleon, his hands full with fighting Britain and consolidating his power within France, was anxious to avoid war with the United States. The new French government received the three new ministers promptly and with full ceremonies. Negotiations commenced immediately and continued for six months with proposals and counter-proposals, with correct diplomatic protocol and courtesy having replaced the rudeness and hostility of the recent past. The Convention of 1800 suspended the treaties of 1778, restored public ships captured by either party, awarded most favored nation status to ships of both nations, prohibited interference with the trade of either nation even when trading with enemies of the other, and accepted the American doctrine of free ships making free goods.¹⁹

America benefited enormously from the Convention of 1800, which ended America’s undeclared war with France, protected American commerce and permitted a vast expansion of her carrying trade. Almost to a man Republicans applauded the agreement, while Federalists found fault with the Convention, officially because it left open the question of indemnities to American merchants. When President Adams presented the convention to the Senate, the

High Federalist faction opposed ratification until their leader, Hamilton, decided that ratification was assured with or without his followers' votes. Hamilton then advised his senatorial friends to vote for ratification and the Convention was adopted, relegating the XYZ Affair and its aftermath to history.

Although the Convention brought peace to America, it severely damaged both the credibility and the political career of its chief proponent, John Adams, who had to advocate peace against the interests of his own party without reaping any credit among his opponents for having adopted their policy. The High Federalists had opposed Adams's peace attempt largely because they recognized that peace would deprive them of their favorite bogeyman, the "Jacobin threat," under cover of which they had indulged their desire to silence their opponent with authoritarian laws. The seeds of the split in the Federalist Party had been sown in the mid-1790s when Adams and Hamilton contended for the position of leader of their party. The issue of how best to handle America's growing difficulties with France steadily drove Adams and Hamilton, with their respective followers, apart. Adams's peace initiative was the final straw for the Hamiltonian Federalists, who condemned John Adams as unfit for the office he held and decided to support Charles Cotesworth Pinckney for President in the election of 1800.20

The public division of the Federalists troubled Adams, who had the fate of the party, as well as his own political future, in mind when he maneuvered for peace with France. Adams believed that the Federalists' success in the election depended on domestic tranquility and he badly wanted a victory at the polls. A Federalist victory was essential to the republic's well-being, but more importantly Adams longed for a personal triumph which would indicate that the people appreciated the difficulty of his recent decisions and approved of his

conduct. Finally, Adams felt that more was at stake than just the outcome of the election of 1800: the divisiveness of American politics also ended the early dream that the new United States would not follow English politics into internecine party warfare.\(^{21}\)

The election, held shortly after the ratification of the Convention with France, resulted in a defeat for the divided Federalists, as well as a new Constitutional amendment. The result of the Electoral College's balloting gave Thomas Jefferson 73 electoral votes, Aaron Burr 73, John Adams 65, Charles C. Pinckney 64, and John Jay 1. The House of Representatives later decided the election in Jefferson's favor, but the unsatisfactory provisions of the Constitution's electoral process led to Amendment XII.

John Adams, embittered by his defeat, summarized the most potent force in his loss: "How mighty a power is the spirit of party! How decisive and unanimous it is!\(^{22}\) The Federalists as a whole were dismayed and appalled by their loss of the highest office in the land and by the sizable majorities the Republicans secured in both Houses of Congress. Perhaps they should not have been so surprised by the outcome of the election, for they had sown the seeds of their defeat with the division of their party, the Sedition Act and their determination to force a war between America and France. The Republican victories in the 1798-1799 off-year elections for Congress, in the middle Atlantic states, indicate that what Americans wanted above all was a policy which would insure the independence of America. Republican candidates in Maryland, New Jersey and Pennsylvania convinced voters that their dislike of recent French actions, notably the XYZ Affair, equaled that of the Federalists. However, the Republicans stressed that the personal liberties of Americans must not

\(^{21}\) Ibid., pp. 207, 213.

\(^{22}\) John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, December 30, 1800, Koch and Pender, eds., *The Writings of John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, p. 145.
be sacrificed in the war fever that had gripped the nation.\textsuperscript{23} The Federalists reluctantly relinquished power to Jefferson's Republicans--permanently as they would never recover from their mistakes to again become a potent force in American politics.

While Britons watched the election of Jefferson with a detached and muted interest, the Convention of 1800 between America and France aroused considerable comment. \textit{Gentlemen's Magazine} noted with disappointment the conclusion of the Convention and the end of hostilities between the two republics, and commented wryly that Britain would have to continue fighting France without the benefit of the diversion provided by the American-French conflict.\textsuperscript{24}

The undeclared war between France and the United States had come at a propitious time for Britain. Fighting the French since 1793 had taxed Britain's economy and the will of her people, so that by 1797 when the conflict between France and America intensified, Britain welcomed any possible respite from internal and external pressures. However, the respite provided did not last long, for 1797 saw a series of invasion scares in England and Ireland.

In December, 1797 one of these threats almost became a reality when a part of the French fleet set sail for Ireland. The French hoped that the disgruntled Irish might welcome them, in return for French aid in overthrowing British rule. Disaffected Irishmen--Catholics and republican Presbyterians--brought together under the banner of the Society of United Irishmen, welcomed the prospect of an invasion as the means of transforming Ireland into a republic. The United Irishmen had earlier assured French agents that the Irish, if supported by a contingent of French troops, would chase the British into the sea.

\textsuperscript{23} Kuehl, "The XYZ Affair and American Nationalism," pp. 5, 9, 14.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Gentlemen's Magazine}, October, 1800.
The sought-after French aid never made landfall, for a combination of poor seamanship and bad weather prevented a landing at Bantry Bay and the invasion force returned to Brest.

The appearance of part of the French fleet off the Irish coast caused invasion fears to last well into 1798. British fears were fuelled by reports that France's Channel ports bustled with preparations for the imminent departure of General Bonaparte and his victorious army. Pitt called on all Britons to arm and prepare the coastal defences for a probable invasion. Thousands of volunteers responded to Pitt's call, and yeomen militia companies formed and drilled daily while a system of warning beacons lay ready for the torch at the first sight of French ships off Britain's coast.\(^25\)

Government concerns over a possible invasion continued even after the ministry became convinced that Bonaparte's destination was Alexandria and not England. In any event, no matter how opposed some people were to the Government's policies, it was highly unlikely that an invasion force would have found much support in Britain. Britons, like their American cousins, might disagree among themselves, but were united against an external threat, particularly from their perennial enemy--France. Two provincial newspapers, the Sheffield Iris and the Cambridge Intelligencer, which consistently took an anti-government, anti-war stance, condemned a possible invasion and recommended that all able-bodied men join the local volunteer force.\(^26\)

During the three years before 1800 the British navy had established its superiority over the French fleet by increasing the effectiveness of its blockade, by emerging victorious in the Battle of the Nile (Aboukir Bay) and by conquer-


\(^{26}\) Gentlemen's Magazine, January, 1798. These Martello Lowers, now picturesque relics, are a feature of British and Irish coastal scenery in 1988.
ing the navy's most lethal enemy, scurvy. The remedy, a regular ration of lime juice issued to all sailors, greatly increased the power of the navy, for a ship could stay at sea for longer periods of time and patrol its assigned area of the blockade. Unfortunately the land forces of the Second Coalition, including Austria, Russia and Holland, were not as successful as the navy. After advancing into French-held Italy and defeating the Directory's armies the armies of Austria and Russia fell to squabbling among themselves. Austria, worried that the Russian forces in Italy might remain there and cost Austria her chance to regain dominance in that region, declined to support Russian soldiers in their Swiss campaign against the French army under General Soult.\textsuperscript{27} The Second Coalition fell apart when Bonaparte decisively defeated the Austrians at Austerlitz, forcing them to make peace. He then wooed the insane Tsar Paul of Russia into joining Sweden, Denmark and Prussia in a League of Armed Neutrality that asserted the members' right to trade with all nations and posed a serious challenge to Britain's blockade.

The lack of British success in the war, rising prices, poor harvests and Napoleon's \textit{coup d'\'etat} combined to renew demands for peace within Britain. Peace feelers between Britain and France never advanced beyond the preliminaries, partially because a wary William Pitt continued to believe that a lasting settlement could only be negotiated with a stable French government which would not embark on adventures abroad to gain support at home. For Pitt Napoleon's Consular Republic did not offer this stability and Britain remained better off continuing the struggle for security, even if the fight had to be carried on alone. Pitt explained his philosophy to the House of Commons by stating: "If peace affords no prospect of security: if it threatens all the evils which we have been struggling to avert . . . then I say it is prudent in us not to negotiate

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, September 7, 1798.
at the present moment."\textsuperscript{28}

During the last three years of the century Pitt's government was kept busy fighting and financing the war, responding to calls for peace, dealing with food shortages and suppressing rebellion in Ireland. The Opposition persevered in its often fruitless criticism of the Government by attacking high taxes, restrictions against public meetings and the lack of sufficient food, all the while demanding Parliamentary reform. The Opposition press elaborated on the people's growing desire for reform by asserting that the Government's involving Britain in a long, costly war had "practically convinced the nation of the necessity of reform."\textsuperscript{29} The Government press continued to stress the need for unity among Britons in the fight against France and the importance of deferring reforms of all sort until after the war was won. A "Suffolk Freeholder," lambasting Fox's return to Parliament in order to fight against the new taxes, defended them as "essential to the carrying on the just and necessary war in which we are engaged." The Freeholder also suggested that Fox would do well to use his "powerful eloquence" to convince the French that Britons remain united against them.\textsuperscript{30}

Fox and his followers, having returned to Parliament in 1798 after their boycott to protest the House of Commons rejection of Grey's plan for reform, decided to focus their firepower on attacking the loss of the traditional "rights of Englishmen"--notably free speech and free assembly. The \textit{Morning Chronicle} cautioned that public meetings should not be held "unless for the purpose of collecting facts, and \textit{silently} transmitting them to the Minister for his private information." The \textit{Chronicle} sarcastically continued that Britons were expected to sit down quietly and bear "every instance of oppression and insult" in order to

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, February 4, 1800.  
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, July 7, 1798.  
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Gentlemen's Magazine}, September, 1798.
to present a picture of a united nation. Members of the Opposition wanted to know if the Government would go so far as to prosecute them for meeting together to enjoy a good dinner. They also were unsure whether they would be gaoled for the gathering or for the quality of the food they enjoyed while most of Britain lacked flour for bread.\textsuperscript{31}

Pitt's high wartime taxes also served as fair game for the Whig Opposition's fire. The conflict against France was evolving into a struggle of financial endurance and in 1798 Pitt determined that the government needed an income tax to continue financing the war. Pitt aimed at placing a greater burden of taxation on the wealthy instead of on the lower and middle classes. The income tax exempted incomes under £60 a year, graduated the rate for incomes between £60 and £200, and required a 10 percent tax on incomes over £200. The new tax, unlike the Assessed Taxes on windows, carriages, horses and inhabited houses, would prove difficult to avoid even for the most accomplished shirkers.

The Opposition secretly rejoiced over Pitt's taxes, hoping that resistance to them might force the Prime Minister out of office and thereby open the door to a Foxite ministry. The Opposition press hammered at the fact that the taxes were not impartial, for the upper classes bore much more than their fair share of the burden. Richard Sheridan, Fox's lieutenant, remarked that although the poor escaped the new tax they would probably starve anyway because the wealth used to employ them would dry up under the burden of financing the war. Fox advised returning to the funding system, which basically borrowed the needed money and counted on future generations to repay the debt.

Unfortunately for the Opposition's aspirations, widespread opposition to

\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, January 1, 1798, December 23, 1800.
the income tax did not materialize and the press began to lament that Englishmen had become "so enamoured of war" that they "don't complain of what the Minister takes, but only what he leaves behind." The same Britons who had resisted an excise tax in 1790 now accepted Pitt's income tax as the price of defeating France and guaranteeing the security of Great Britain. Fox and his followers failed to understand that the Government's emphasis on the importance of insuring Britain's security caused many Englishmen to accept measures during wartime that they never would have agreed to in peacetime.

The war's effect on the British economy, including high prices and shortages of goods and food, led to a renewal of demonstrations demanding peace and Parliamentary reform. The Government responded to this activity, much as the Adams administration had, by passing the Newspaper Publication Act of 1798 and, later, the Combination Laws of 1799 and 1800. The Newspaper Publication Act placed publishers under the close scrutiny of the local magistrates and held all newspaper proprietors criminally responsible for the acts of their editors/printers. The Government defended the act by alleging that some newspaper proprietors concealed their identity in order to escape prosecution under the Two Acts.

The *Morning Chronicle* denounced the legislation as "monstrous," for no law should make the "Master answerable for the personal crimes of his Servant." Exemplifying itself the *Chronicle* pointed to its outstanding reputation for truthful and accurate reporting, stated that the names of its proprietor and printer appeared on record at all times, and affirmed that although the paper spoke for the Opposition, it did so with due respect for "all authorities of Government." A perusal of several numbers of the *Chronicle* bears out these

---

32 *Morning Chronicle*, December 19, 1798.
33 *Morning Chronicle*, April 7, 1798.
assertions, for the paper rationally and analytically examined the issues of the day and pointed out the pitfalls and errors in the Government's policies. As the self-appointed watchdogs of the "principles of pure and rational Freedom" the Chronicle and other moderate Opposition papers did their job well by keeping before the public view any information regarding the passage of any laws which might impinge on the rights of free speech and assembly

The final step in the Government's suppression of the reform societies came in 1799 and 1800 with the passage of the Combination Acts, which resulted mainly from the reports of the Committees of Secrecy of the Lords and the Commons regarding the seizure of the London Corresponding Society's papers and the recent rebellion in Ireland. The Committees' reports indicated that the London Corresponding Society maintained contact with like-minded groups in many of the principal towns throughout Britain and that these groups persevered in their efforts to promote the reform of Parliament. The Combination Act of 1799 also demonstrated the ministry's concern over trade union activities and suspicions about the loyalty of the lower orders. The Government feared that persuasive radicals might turn uneducated workers from their protests over the high cost of food and their inadequate wages to demands for change in Parliament and the Government as the French sans culottes had done.34

When the first Combination Act led to further organization among workers to petition the Government for the repeal of the law, those in power worried that agents from some of the "seditious societies" had joined with the protesting workers to spread disorder throughout the kingdom. The Commons Committee of Secrecy presented a report which linked insurrectionary British radicals to

34 Morning Chronicle, June 19, 1799; and Emsley, British Society and the French Wars, p. 84.
the Society of United Irishmen and, through them, to the French Jacobins. The Committee's report, probably inaccurate and overstated, revived apprehensions concerning the spread of Jacobinism in Great Britain and the Combination Act of 1800 was the logical outcome of these concerns as well as of the events which occurred during the Irish Rebellion. In its final form the Combination Act declared that all societies which took secret oaths, or had branches throughout the nation, were illegal, and anyone who collaborated with another person to attain a reduction in working hours or a rise in pay could be brought before a magistrate and jailed for three months.\(^{35}\)

Despite clear threats to traditionally English liberties, forebodings of imminent insurrection and rampant Jacobinism prompted nearly universal acceptance of the laws, and only a small opposition to them and a lacklustre defense of the Corresponding Societies appeared, led by Richard Sheridan and Fox's nephew, Lord Holland. The lack of real opposition to these acts indicates how minimal was the real danger to the internal security of Britain from protests over the scarcity of food and low wages. The *Morning Chronicle* summed up the cat and mouse game of the Government by saying: "The existence of Jacobinism is still a matter of dispute. It has been totally suppressed, when Ministers wish to take the credit of it; and it rises again in all its horrors, when an appeal is made to the Constitution, or an enquiry proposed into the conduct of its guardians."\(^{36}\)

The greatest threat to the unity and stability of Great Britain existed, not in England but, in Ireland. From the reign of Elizabeth I on, the Irish, troublesome enough in peacetime, plagued the English in wartime by using the Government's preoccupation abroad to gain greater economic and political


\(^{36}\) *Morning Chronicle*, December 6, 1800.
rights at home. Three distinct and disparate groups existed in Ireland: the Roman Catholic majority, the Presbyterians of Ulster and the ruling Anglican minority. All three groups disliked and distrusted each other, and none were exempt from religious bigotry. However, on one matter Catholics and Presbyterians could agree—the need to wipe out Ireland’s rotten boroughs and reform representation in the Irish Parliament. The outbreak of war between Britain and France brought to the fore the necessity to achieve cooperation among the diverse groups in Ireland to present a united front against France. Pitt hoped to defuse potential unrest by pushing through the Irish Parliament a Catholic Relief Act which gave Catholics the right to vote, to sit on juries, and to hold minor civil posts and junior commissioned ranks in the army. However, the act gave neither Catholics, nor Presbyterians—both able to vote since 1782—the right to sit in Parliament.37

The lengthy war and resulting hard times caused those who wanted radical reform in Ireland, notably the Society of United Irishmen, to demand the transformation of Ireland into a democratic republic like that of France. The attempted invasion of Ireland in 1797, as well as the revolutionary talk of the United Irishmen convinced Lord Camden, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, that an actual French landing could be the spark needed to detonate a major insurrection. Camden decided to take the steps necessary to avert this possibility by disarming the Presbyterians of Ulster who were the base of the United Irishmen’s strength. Ulster proved difficult to subdue using only regular troops so the yeoman militia was called up. The Anglican and extremely conservative members of this volunteer force which represented the Irish gentry, disarmed Ulster with a bloody enthusiasm, aimed more at the Catholics than at the Presbyterians. The Society of United Irishmen was mortally wounded in the

violence, and the idea of a non-sectarian democratic republic died, but the unrestrained actions of the government and the troops managed to reignite the religious fires of past centuries.

By the spring of 1798 Ireland was in turmoil, with Protestants and Catholics at each other's throats. The Catholics began to look to France for aid, but deliverance failed to arrive when Napoleon set sail for Egypt and what he believed would be a more certain victory. Pitt sent thousands of troops into Ireland, effectively suppressed the uprising, and captured a small French force that had managed to land in County Mayo, too late to be of any consequence in the outcome of the rebellion.\(^{38}\)

The British press as a whole condemned the Irish rebellion and stressed the need for cooperation between England and Ireland. The Opposition press felt that while the Dublin Parliament and the Lord-Lieutenant could have handled the situation with less violence, outright revolt had to be put down and the nation preserved. The Whig Opposition papers advised the need for some kind of reform to quiet the legitimate grievances of the Irish and proposed that a union between Great Britain and Ireland might solve all problems.\(^{39}\)

Pitt's solution to the Irish problem was to unite England and Ireland under one legislature, as they were already united under one king. Pitt's Ireland and Great Britain in a single parliament in which the Irish would have proportional representation; and, the emancipation of the Catholics. Pitt decided to seek legislation of each part separately, starting with political union.

To convince the Irish Parliament to vote away their own existence Pitt presented two arguments. First, he reminded the Anglican landowning class of the insecurity of their position in Ireland, where they were attempting to control

\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp. 387-99.

\(^{39}\) Morning Chronicle, September 20, 1798.
a rebellious majority by manipulating a corrupt franchise. Second, while Protestants in the Irish Parliament would never accept the inclusion of Catholics because the Catholics would eventually gain dominance over the Anglicans, Catholics could safely be brought into the Westminster Parliament where they would be only a small minority. Pitt dangled a further attractive carrot to induce Irish MPs into voting for union; under Union there would be free trade and Irish linen could be sold as a British product within every part of the empire. Finally, when members could not be convinced by rational argument, a bribe large enough to satisfy their greed and silence their protests sufficed.

The Act of Union passed both the Irish and the Westminster Parliaments in 1800 and took effect January 1, 1801.

But Pitt’s plan for reconciliation of Ireland ran aground on the issue of Catholic emancipation, the necessary sequel to Union, which proved impossible to implement. Pitt had erred by not securing the full approval of his ministers for his plan before he began to work for the Union. When it came time to legislate for emancipation Pitt discovered that he faced a divided Cabinet and a hostile King. George III opposed emancipation because he felt that no good could come from putting political power in the hands of a volatile, Catholic lower class. The King also sincerely believed that emancipation meant the ruin of the Church of England, which he had vowed to guard and govern at his coronation. George III stood steadfast against Pitt’s persuasion and without the backing of his ministers Pitt’s plan had no chance. Pitt resigned from office over the issue, but gave the King his promise that he would continue to support the government and never raise the emancipation issue again, as long as George III lived.

Members of Parliament who opposed emancipation argued that Pitt had pushed one partisan point to the detriment of the national unity he had cham-
pioned throughout the war against France. Those who supported emancipation accused Pitt of duplicity for getting Catholics to agree to the Union, but not pushing as hard as he could have for emancipation. Pitt’s agreement with George III not to raise the issue again seemed to prove his critics’ claim. What neither of these criticisms considered was that Pitt had not abandoned either the Catholics or his principles.

Pitt failed because he totally misjudged the political climate on emancipation. This failure resulted in part because Pitt felt that emancipation was just, while the vast majority of Britons were not ready for such a revolutionary step. Pitt fought for emancipation and Union because he strongly believed that they were the only effective means of quieting the discontented, rebellious Irish and enabling Britain to return her full attention to the difficult task at hand, the defeat of France.

Thus by the first quarter of 1801 both John Adams and William Pitt were out of office. The personal and political sacrifices they had made for their countries went unappreciated by many of their compatriots. Adams, remarking on the role he played in preventing a possibly disastrous war between America and France, said that he wanted the inscription on his tombstone to read: "Here lies the man who saved the peace." Adams never returned to public life, but in his later years he and Jefferson did mend the friendship that was nearly destroyed by factional strife. Pitt agreed to accept office again in 1804 following another of George III’s lapses into insanity and remained Prime Minister until his death, mainly because of overwork, in 1806. Adams lived to see the end of the turmoil caused by Revolutionary and Napoleonic France and rejoiced that the Revolution which had produced all "the calamities and desolations to the human race" was finally ended.
By 1801 Britain and America had decided how each would react to the revolutionary principles coming out of France. The two nations had travelled similar paths rejoicing that France had followed their example; then both had increasing doubt about the violent nature of the Revolution; and finally both took offensive action against perceived threats to their national security. But, in the end, the two nations had arrived at different destinations. In Britain the conservative Tory ministry emerged triumphant over the reform societies, while in America, Jeffersonian Republicans voted the Federalists out of office and instituted the "Revolution of 1800."

Social conditions in Britain and America differed considerably, with Americans possessing neither the aristocracy nor the established church which supplied much of Britain's governing class. On the whole, Americans of the laboring classes took a greater interest in politics and world events than did their British counterparts, possibly because of the higher literacy rate in America, where most adult males could read and write to some extent. Although Americans rejected the use of any sort of title, as illustrated by the debate over what to call the President of the United States, and repudiated an official aristocracy, class distinctions continued to exist. Members of the old elite--doctors, lawyers, merchants, bankers, plantation owners--for the most part supported the Federalist Party, while the middle and lower classes rallied behind the Republicans.
Both the Tories of Britain and the Federalists of America believed in the importance of leadership by an elite, whose wisdom and virtue made them the men best suited to insure the welfare of their country. These men saw themselves not as responsible to the people, but as responsible for them. This elite needed to maintain their control of the government because they believed that they were the only men capable of holding the nation united against the rising forces of democracy that threatened to tear their countries apart.

The Tories and Federalists feared the specter of mob rule—the clamor of the large mass of laboring people claiming admission to the state. The example of the Jacobins in Paris made these conservative men blanch. This fear was especially prevalent in Britain where the industrial revolution was more advanced, thereby making the threat of the urban working classes seem more immediate. Both the Tories and Federalists attempted to maintain their hold on the reins of power by exploiting popular fears that the ideas of the French Revolution might spread to their countries. However, these efforts met with vastly different results.

In Britain, Pitt's systematic suppression of the reform movement was supported by a majority of the Members of Parliament and the political elite, who viewed the demands of the reformers as untimely and unwise. The Government's identification of legitimate agitation with bloody revolution, and timely reform with dangerous change resulted in the public's acceptance of limitations on their traditional liberties. Additionally, Pitt's Ministry emphasized the lower class make-up of the more radical societies, which increased the governing classes' feelings of vulnerability.

1 For many in Britain the Luddite riots of 1811-12 were the realization of this fear. Although Luddism was, primarily, a cry for bearable living conditions on the part of a wretchedly poor population of laborers, to the governing classes the angry laborers seemed indistinguishable from the French Jacobins, intent on overturning the social order, unrestrained by convictions of loyalty or patriotism.
In America, the Federalists attempt to limit the liberties of citizens backfired as moderate men looked to the Republicans to maintain the independence of the nation while protecting their hard-won liberties. The issue between the Federalists and Republicans was not simply who favored liberty and who did not, for each side believed that American liberty was at stake and that they alone were its defenders. The Federalists sincerely believed that only by combatting French principles of equality and fraternity could American liberties be preserved. For the Federalists, the liberty of the Frenchman was a sham, with its defects hidden under the paraphenalia of clubs, poles and red caps. No stability for the nation existed in French liberty and the Federalists feared that the spread of these ideas to America might doom their new government.

The instability of the French governments during the Revolution's various phases increased feelings of insecurity in Britain. While there is little doubt that the Government overestimated the danger from the reform societies, its fears are understandable in light of the real threat to British security posed by the ideological nature of the war against Revolutionary France and the rebellious actions of the Irish. The opposition of the Foxite Whigs could be tolerated since its membership belonged to the ruling elite, but the radical societies consisted of men who traditionally had no voice in government and who came from the same social class as the sans-culottes of Paris. While the majority of the societies' members abhored violence and civil disorder, a number of the more hot-headed reformers had made statements which, at the time, seemed inflammatory and threatening to the Government.

The apprehensions of the Federalists were no less real than the fears of the British Government, but they were less legitimate. The threat posed by Revolutionary France to the security of the United States was minimal, even during
the years of the undeclared naval war. The internal danger from the most radical of the Republicans was almost nonexistent. The rebellion of the "Whiskey Boys" had been convincingly crushed long before the alleged Jacobin threat reached its height with the XYZ Affair. Clashes in the streets between government supporters and Francophiles which occurred throughout the late 1790s heightened Federalists' feelings of insecurity, but these incidents posed no danger to America's internal security. Additionally, in the late 1790s the Republicans moderated their tone and began to stress the need for peace with France and the pursuit of an independent policy which would protect America's national interest.

In Britain, most of the reformers were sincere and courageous men who felt that a grave injustice was being done to the people. These men wanted to secure the common man a voice in public affairs, that is, a vote for Members of Parliament. They had a naive belief in the efficacy of parliamentary reform as the panacea for all the ills the people suffered. The Friends of the People, made up largely of Foxite Whigs, shared with the Jeffersonian Republicans a conviction that they were the leaders of an enlightened policy based on reason and open to the changes that would improve life for all the people. More radical reformers, found in the London Corresponding Society in Britain and the Democratic-Republican Societies in America, might demand a quicker redress of their grievances, a broadly based suffrage and equitable taxes respectively, but thoughts of implementing forcible changes were discouraged by the more moderate men.

The Tories and Federalists both moved against those whom they believed posed a danger to their nation. In its war against reform, the British Government suffered a notable defeat at the State Trials of 1794 when it failed to

---

convince three juries that Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke and John Thelwall were guilty of high treason. However, this failure did not stop Pitt’s legislation against perceived threats to the Constitution. The Two Acts followed the State Trials, while invasion scares and rebellion in Ireland led to further limitations on the rights of individual British citizens. Security was the word of the day and most Britons accepted the strictures placed on them as a necessary cost of defeating Revolutionary France. The fear of revolution and the spectre of mob rule in London dominated the ruling elite’s imagination until the 1840s, so deeply did it strike into the national consciousness. This pervasive and long-lasting fear was to enact the even more repressive Six Acts in the post-war period, and was to delay even moderate reform until the 1830s.

On the other hand, the Foxite Whigs did not surrender the traditional English liberties easily. The Opposition fought every Pittite measure dealing with alleged sedition, treasonable practices, Habeas Corpus, or freedom of the press. Fox and Grey also continued to press for parliamentary reform, more equitable taxes and peace with France. Fox’s eloquent defense of the rights of Englishmen helped to lay the theoretical foundations of British political progress in the nineteenth century. The Opposition’s long and often futile struggle for reform finally paid off in 1830, when Grey became the head of a government pledged to reform Parliament. The Grey Ministry’s Reform Act of 1832 followed the general lines of the views of the enlightened reformers of the 1790s.

By 1801, in the United States, the Republican opposition, with its liberal ideals of the rights of man and government by the people, emerged triumphant over the narrow parochialism and elitism of the Federalists. Ironically, France’s revolutionary notions did not displace the Federalists from power; rather the Federalists’ own actions in response to perceived threats soon cost
them their hold on the Presidency. Increasing tensions between America and France, and fears of "Jacobin" ideas infiltrating the populace caused the Federalists to follow Britain's example and pass anti-libertarian and ultimately unenforceable laws against sedition and treason. While such legislation worked for Pitt's government, engaged in war and based on a very narrow electorate, it backfired on Adams's administration. The Alien and Sedition Acts were seen by the Republicans for exactly what they were--an attempt to keep power in the hands of the Federalists. Most politically aware Americans would not condone the abrogation of the hard-won rights which these Acts imposed.

As popular as John Adams became among Republicans for ending the undeclared war between America and France, he lost the support of the Hamiltonian Federalists, who did not wish to be deprived of their favorite issue, the "Jacobin threat". This split in the Federalist Party almost ensured the election of a Republican to the Presidency. Thomas Jefferson's victory resulted from the split and from Alexander Hamilton's intense hatred of Aaron Burr, which caused him to direct his followers in Congress to vote for Jefferson, the lesser of the two evils.

Jefferson's victory has been called the "Revolution of 1800," in which the common man had his say and dispatched the Federalist "monarchy men." But Jefferson's election was not a mass uprising because although most adult white males had the right to vote, unlike Britain where the franchise was strictly limited, only a small minority exercised this privilege. During Jefferson's Presidency the electorate increased as more men voted, implementing the Republican belief in the ability of the average man to enter into all decisions that affected his well-being.

The French Revolution provided the spark to the ambitions of democrats in America and reformers in Britain. The reform movement in Britain ran
headlong into a proud, fearful and powerful government, not ready to admit
that change could be attained without social upheaval or disaster. Indeed, many
members of the governing class could not see that a reform of Parliament was
even needed. Reform in Britain would have to wait until the country recovered
from the long war against France. But both the Whigs and the Republicans
eventually emerged victorious in their struggle to protect the rights of the peo­
ple. The cause of the Republicans in America was aided by the ideas of liberty
and equality coming out of her sister republic. The French Revolution had
hailed the twilight of "aristocracy" in the United States, even if it failed to do
the same at home.

Thus, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the United States and
Great Britain had chosen different paths. The idea of a leadership elite control­
ling government would continue to receive credence in Britain even as late as
Lord Salisbury’s tenure as Prime Minister at the end of the century. However,
this ruling elite would institute a gradual reform of the system of parliament­
ary representation until a universal suffrage was achieved. In America, democrat­
ization proceeded much more rapidly, so that by the end of the 1820s Andrew
Jackson’s election instituted the belief that the "common man" was as capable
as any other at fulfilling the duties required by a position in government.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Document Collections


Pamphlet Literature


*The Correspondence Between Citizen Genet, Minister of the French Republic, to the United States of North America, and the Officers of the Federal Government; To Which Are Prefixed the Instructions From the Constituted Authorities in France to the Said Minister*. Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin Bache, 1793.


Papers, Memoirs, Letters


Newspapers and Journals

*American Museum; or, Universal Magazine*, January, 1787-December, 1792.

*Aurora and General Advertiser*, (Philadelphia) October, 1790-1812.
Columbian Centinel (Boston), 1789-1801.

Daily Advertiser (New York), 1789-1801.

Gazette of the United States, 1791-1801.

Gentlemen's Magazine and Historical Chronicle, 1789-1801.

Massachusetts Magazine, 1789-1796.

Morning Chronicle (London), 1789-1801.

National Gazette (Philadelphia), October, 1791-October, 1793.

Times (London), 1789-1801.

Secondary Sources

Books


**Articles**


**Theses and Dissertations**


