THE COMING OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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rights could be constructed. The least arguable of all consequences of the night of August 4 is certainly the realization of a national unity embracing all parts of the French territory and all classes of Frenchmen, a unity for which the monarchy had long labored and which it was the glory of the National Assembly to achieve. It is only just to recall the essential role played on that famous night by the liberal nobles, when they associated themselves with the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Third Estate to merge themselves in the nation.

Chapter 12
The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen

With despotism destroyed and privilege abolished, nothing prevented the prompt drafting of the Declaration, and the Assembly set to work on August 12. Numerous projects had been submitted, and the "bureaus" into which the deputies divided for discussion formulated others. A new committee was chosen, the third, composed of five members, to draw up a text as a basis for the debates. Mirabeau reported for the committee on the seventeenth. Opposition was not yet silenced; some again raised the question of whether a declaration was opportune, and Mirabeau himself proposed postponement until the completion of the constitution. But the majority had decided otherwise, and the proposal of the committee, no doubt compromised by the equivocal stand of its spokesman, was rejected in favor of the one submitted by Bureau Six. Discussed without interruption from the twentieth to the twenty-sixth, it was significantly modified, not in substance (on which there was general agreement) so much as in presentation, the final text being reduced from twenty-four to seventeen articles, and the language becoming more striking, felicitous and concise. ¹⁰

¹⁰ For the full text of the Declaration see the Appendix.
The debates grew excited only on the twenty-second and twenty-third, over the articles which declared it necessary "to the good order of society" for "religion and morality" as well as "public worship" to be respected. The preamble had placed the Declaration under the auspices of the "Supreme Being," but religion was understood to mean the Catholic religion, which enjoyed a monopoly of public worship. Churchmen vehemently insisted that the Assembly confirm the existence of a religion of state, i.e., a privileged if not obligatory religion. Toleration was granted only in oblique language: "No citizen should be disturbed who does not trouble the established worship." Mirabeau protested with vigor in favor of freedom of worship and conscience, and Rabaut-Saint-Etienne pleaded the same case for the Protestants. It was in vain; all that was agreed to was to eliminate the question of public worship from the Declaration, making it a matter for regulation by the Constitution. Attention turned to a motion by the comte de Castellane: "No man may be disturbed for his religious opinions, or troubled in the performance of his worship," but the second clause was dropped and the first gravely qualified. Article x of the Declaration was finally phrased as follows: "No one may be disturbed for his opinions, even in religion, provided that their manifestation does not trouble public order as established by law."

On August 26 du Port obtained the addition of Article xvii, concerning property. The comte de Montmorency proposed that the right of the people to revise the Constitution be included, but this question along with several others was postponed, on the understanding that the Declaration, now fixed in seventeen articles, would be reviewed and completed when the Constitution was finished. But no such revision ever took place, for in August 1791, when the debate was resumed, Thouret objected that the Declaration was now so familiar to the people, so clothed in their eyes with a "religious and sacred character," that it had become a "symbol of political faith" which should be touched with extreme caution. The supplement considered necessary was therefore combined in 1791 with a summary of the Declaration to form a preamble to the Constitution, stating the "fundamental arrangements" which it guaranteed. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, symbol of the Revolution of 1789, remained as provisionally adopted by the National Assembly on August 26 of that year.

**Principles**

*Men are born and remain free and equal in rights.* This memorable affirmation, standing at the head of Article 1, summarizes the accomplishments of the Revolution from July 14 to August 4, 1789. The rest of the Declaration is so to speak only an exposition and commentary on it.

"The aim of all political association is to preserve the natural and imprescriptible rights of man." Here (in Article 11) the idea of the social contract, popularized in France by Rousseau, was implicitly adopted. Sieyès and Mounier had also set up "the greatest good of all" and "the general felicity" as the aims of social organization; but these phrases are not to be found in the text of the Declaration, though the equivalent, the "general happiness," was to figure in the Constitution of 1793.

The rights of man are said in Article 11 to be "liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression." Seven articles are devoted to liberty. It is defined, in general, by Articles iv and v as the right "to do whatever does not harm another"; its "limits" can be "determined only by the law." On individual liberty there are three articles, of which one is very long, laying the foundation of the new penal code and
criminal procedure, two essential reforms of the Constituent Assembly: "No man may be indicted, arrested or detained except in cases determined by law and according to the forms which it has prescribed." Every man is presumed innocent until pronounced guilty; the law may not be retroactive; it may prescribe only strictly necessary penalties. Liberty of opinion, "even in religion," is mentioned in Article x, as has been stated; liberty of the press in Article xi. Property is dealt with only in Article xvii: it is "an inviolable and sacred right," of which one may be deprived only for reasons of public utility as determined by law, and only with a "just compensation in advance." Security is not again mentioned in the Declaration; it simply follows from the maintenance of order as guaranteed by public force, whose use for the "advantage of all" is envisaged in Article xii. Nor is there any explanation of resistance to oppression.

Since the Declaration begins by declaring men equal in rights, it is noteworthy that in the enumeration of imprescriptible rights equality does not appear. Sieyès in his own project had defined it with care, in two articles, holding that there is no liberty if privileges subsist, but that equality is to be understood as applying to "rights," not to "means." Since the Assembly was in entire agreement on these matters, it is strange that the two definitions were not retained, especially the second which would seem indispensable to dispel ambiguity. No article is devoted specifically to equality, but Article vi, defining the law, stipulates that law is the same for all and that all citizens are equal in the eyes of the courts and in admission to public employment, and Article xiii assures equality in taxation.

In laying down the principle that "political association" has the preservation of the rights of man as its object, the Declaration affirms implicitly that government can be no one's property but must belong to all. Sieyès and Mounier agreed on this point, the latter having declared explicitly

that government is created "in the interest not of those who govern but of those who are governed." It follows that all authority emanates from the associated people and is subject to their control, for otherwise their rights would be without fundamental guarantees. This is the meaning of the national sovereignty proclaimed in Article iii: "The principle of all sovereignty rests essentially in the nation. No body and no individual may exercise authority which does not emanate from the nation expressly." Hence "law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to take part, in person or by their representatives, in its formation" (Article vi). They vote taxes in the same way (Article xiv). Every public agent is accountable for his conduct in office (Article xv). On the organization of government the Declaration prescribes only one principle: the powers of government, legislative, executive and judicial, must be separated (Article xvi).

**Backward and Forward Looks**

It is a commonplace of counterrevolutionary polemics to find fault with the Declaration for being too philosophical and abstract. In reality it bears the strong imprint of the circumstances surrounding its birth; its "historical" character is evident both in what it includes and in what it omits, and in the unequal importance which it obviously places on different principles. If the patriots disregarded objections of whose cogency they were well aware, if they held to the idea of promulgating a Declaration, it is because in their eyes it had an especially great negative value, in the sense that it condemned the practices of the Old Regime and prevented their revival. Its formulation of principles is in general terms, as is customary in legislative documents—nor were the American declarations
any different in this respect—but for the members of the National Assembly and their contemporaries there was nothing abstract or even properly philosophical in such generalization, for under each article they mentally aligned concrete particularities from which they had suffered. Sovereignty belongs to the nation—i.e., France is no longer the property of the king. No obedience is owed except to the law—i.e., the arbitrary will of the king, and of his ministers and agents, is binding on no one. No man may be arrested or detained except by law—i.e., there shall be no more arrest by administrative orders merely. The accused is innocent until pronounced guilty—i.e., no restoration of torture. Citizens are equal before the law—i.e., there is no justification for the privileges. Resistance to oppression is allowable—i.e., the insurrection of July 14 was legitimate. And so on and on. As the historian Aulard put it, the Declaration is essentially the death certificate of the Old Regime.

This is why the preamble asserts that “ignorance, disregard or contempt of the rights of man are the sole causes of public misfortunes and governmental corruption,” and that henceforth the citizens, by comparing the actions of government with “the aim of all political institutions,” may “found their demands on simple and incontestable principles.” It is also for the reasons suggested above that the Assembly did not favor the deductive order adopted by Sieyès, a true theoretical philosopher, or yet enumerate the various principles in the order we should prefer today, or with uniform emphasis. We have seen with what caution religious toleration was provided for, where to us it seems that freedom of conscience and worship deserve first place, or at least the most straightforward affirmation. If the Assembly judged otherwise, it was not only from a wish to spare the patriotic lower clergy, but also because many of the grievance-lists were indifferent to Protestants, hostile to Jews and outspokenly in favor of maintaining the preeminence of Catholicism; and also because the Assembly itself, being not at all “laic” in the present sense of the word, did not dream of depriving the Catholic Church (as was soon proved) of its monopoly of public worship, birth and marriage records, education and poor relief, but intended instead to bring the Church more closely than ever into the government of the State. Similarly, it would certainly be thought necessary today to insist upon the right of property and to define it and justify it, as Sieyès had done. The Assembly did not trouble to do so because it was a right which the Old Regime did not question. On the contrary, ministers and administrators of the eighteenth-century always spoke of property with respect, in an altogether bourgeois manner. Property rights were appealed to by the aristocracy to defend their position as manorial lords. The only concrete complaint concerning property under the Old Regime was that the public authorities were often highhanded in making expropriations on the ground of public utility, negligent in compensating the owners, arbitrary in assessing values and slow in payment; and these are the faults aimed at in Article XVII, which at the same time was probably intended to legitimize the requirement that the peasants should buy up the manorial dues. On the other hand, individual liberty is the subject of three articles, because administrative arrest and abuses of criminal procedure were a menace to all. The rule of law was insisted upon because under the Old Regime there was no legal requirement which might not be somehow evaded at the King’s discretion. Equality of rights was treated at length because special privilege was the foundation of the social hierarchy. The thought in the Declaration looked to the past more than the future.

Nor are the silence in the Declaration less revealing. If there is any principle we should expect to find in it, it is the economic freedom which the bourgeoisie held to above all others. It will be sought in vain. One reason is that the Old
Regime, since the suppression of gilds by Turgot and the removal of controls on the grain trade by Brienne, was no longer hostile to economic freedom. Another reason was division within the Third Estate itself on the matter of gilds and similar bodies.

The Declaration says nothing of the right of association, not because the Assembly meant to prohibit it purely and simply, for the clubs became one of the most solid pillars in revolutionary organization, but rather because it was inopportune to proclaim a right of association at a time when the clergy was to cease to be a "body," and when suppression of property in office was to put an end to the judicial "bodies" also.

The rights of assembly and petition, so much used by the revolutionaries themselves at the very moment, were likewise passed over in silence. Nor was anything said, though Sieyès had foreseen the question, of education and relief of the needy. These were matters of importance for the society of the future, not for the destruction of the Old Regime. They could wait, and were in fact comprised in Section Two of the Constitution as completed in 1791, because at that time the Assembly was oriented mentally toward the future, whereas in August 1789 its members were still hypnotized by the past.

Yet the past could not be separated from the future. Although the Declaration in the minds of its authors had for the moment an essentially negative meaning, it was none the less drawn up in a positive form, in which the preamble especially, while recalling what was to be condemned in the old order, indicated that the principles of the new order were also to be laid down. In this sense, too, in the eyes of the Assembly, the Declaration had a concrete meaning. They knew the kind of organization they wanted for France, and consequently how the principles proclaimed in the Declaration should be interpreted in practice. But whereas interpretation was not open to doubt when matters of the past were concerned, because everyone knew what was aimed at, it was subject to controversy when it turned to the future, since the future was still undetermined and was to be settled only by the Constitution itself. Principles expressed in general terms might be, in the judgment of many, logically contradictory to the arrangements made in the Constitution. Hence the strong current in favor of postponement: if one waited until the concrete task was accomplished, then the terms of the Declaration of Rights might be so adjusted as to be entirely consistent with it.

There is no foundation to the charge often made against the National Assembly, that it incited people to believe in an unlimited and arbitrary liberty and to demand a perfect equality. From Article iv it follows expressly that liberty is limited by law, and the first article stipulates than men are equal in rights, an equality carefully defined in other articles as an equality before the law. Nor would we be rash to suppose that the Assembly, in deciding not to mention "general felicity" as the purpose of political association, wished to prevent the transformation of juridical or civil equality into social equality, and to forestall those who might appeal to equality in demanding improvement of the lot of the poor. Even these precautions were not generally considered sufficient. Some deputies, notably churchmen such as Grégoire, suggested that the Declaration of Rights be supplemented with a Declaration of Duties; they were told that rights and duties were correlative, the right to liberty necessarily implying the duty to respect the liberty of others, as was set forth in Article iv. But in any case it is certain that the leaders of the Assembly felt no apprehension at the time. This is not because having read Rousseau they believed man by nature good—they were far more realistic than is often supposed. It is rather that they represented a triumphant class, full of energy and on the way to transforming the world. The
bourgeoisie had no doubts of itself, nor did it doubt that the new order it had conceived, in accord with the laws of nature and the divine Will, was destined forever to assure the welfare and progress of the human race. Warnings produced simply incredulity.

Yet the warnings were justified. From the standpoint of the bourgeoisie it would have been prudent to adopt the distinction drawn by Sieyès between equality of rights and equality of means. It would have been wise to include a definition of property. Without these safeguards the Declaration, if examined on a philosophical level and without regard to historical circumstances, can readily be interpreted in a socialistic sense, as was recognized by Aulard. And this is what has in fact happened.

Moreover, though liberty of the individual may imply a corresponding obligation toward other individuals, nothing in the Declaration affirms the obligations of all individuals to the national community. Such obligations may certainly be prescribed by law through restrictions on the rights of man in time of emergency; more than once, in fact, habeas corpus has been suspended in England and the state of siege declared in France. The Declaration might therefore well have stated that the right to liberty varies with circumstances, and that circumstances are to be judged by the community itself. This is what several deputies maintained in connection with the repression of counterrevolutionaries. Gouy d'Arès had already argued that human rights could not be the same in wartime as in peace, and the same doctrine in 1793 and 1794 was to justify the emergency government of the Terror.

Yet nothing of this relativity of individual rights was retained in the Declaration. Silence on the matter was due to the circumstances. On the one hand, it was unnecessary to remind the Third Estate of its duties to itself or of its obligations under conditions of war; at a time when it had declared that it alone constituted the national community,
the Declaration and the constitutional ideas developed by the Assembly. "All citizens," according to Article vi, "have the right to take part, in person or by their representatives," in the formation of the law. And Article xiv: "Citizens have the right, by themselves or through their representatives," to vote taxes. The phrase "in person" seemed to authorize the direct democracy attempted by the electoral districts of Paris. But the Assembly certainly meant to organize a purely representative government. The completed Constitution was not even submitted in 1791 to popular ratification. The legislature became the almost absolute master of the community. Amendment of the Constitution was surrounded with such formalities as to be impossible in less than ten years, and in addition the initiative had to come from the legislators, not from the people. As early as the law of December 12, 1789, there seemed to be a violation of Article vi. That article, referring to all citizens, seemed to call for universal suffrage, whereas the Assembly by the law of December 12 withheld the vote from those citizens whom it designated as "passive," those who did not pay taxes equal in value to three days' wages.

This inconsistency might have been avoided had the Declaration included an article prepared by Sieyès in July, which distinguished "active" from "passive" citizens, and which held voting to be a public function to which all were admissible, if only they could meet, as for any public function, the conditions prescribed by law as a guarantee of capacity. This was the doctrine half a century later of Guizot and Royer-Collard; the bourgeoisie reasoned in 1789 as later under Louis-Philippe. But in 1789 the democratic movement was not yet born, and the bourgeoisie expressed its thought in less measured and prudent language than it used later, since it did not foresee that its own political ascendency would ever be questioned, and since even the Americans, who expressed themselves in the same way, were far from having arrived at universal suffrage.

Avoidance of such inconsistencies would indeed not have checked the course of history. The common people had fought to destroy the Old Regime and had forced the abolition of feudalism. It was chimerical to suppose that they would let themselves be excluded forever from the vote, in the name of a declaration which proclaimed men equal in rights. But thanks to the superb confidence of the bourgeoisie, its Declaration could become a charter of political and even social democracy, since it neither condemned the regulation of economic life nor subjected the right of property to any definition.
The Revolutionary Solution in the Balance

The King’s Passive Resistance

Though Louis XVI had capitulated in the face of insurrection, he was not yet resigned to accepting all the acts of the Assembly without resistance. The infectious enthusiasm of the night of August 4 left him cold. On the fifth he wrote Monseigneur Dulau, archbishop of Arles: “I will never consent to the spoliation of my clergy or of my nobility. I will not sanction decrees by which they are despoiled.” When the decree of August 5–11 was submitted to him he remained silent. He was equally uncommunicative on the Declaration. A decree of August 10, requiring officers and soldiers to take an oath “to the Nation, the king and the law” was even more a thorn in his side.

The Assembly was embarrassed. Until now its members had not doubted that their decrees needed the king’s approval. But if he had the right to reject the decree of August 5–11 and the Declaration, and later all the constitutional labors of the Assembly, the Old Regime would come back to life at least in part, for to gain the king’s support the Assembly would have to compromise with the aristocracy, and this was precisely what the patriot party refused even to consider.
For over a month the Assembly would not admit that it faced a blank wall, which might have to be hurdled by a new bound of revolutionary action. On September 4 Mounier proposed an evasion of the issue: “The king would have no right to oppose the establishment of a constitution; he must sign and ratify it for himself and his successors. Having an interest in its provisions he might insist upon certain changes, but if these were contrary to public liberty the Assembly would have two forms of recourse: it could refuse to grant taxes, and it could refer to its constituents, for certainly the Nation has a right to use any means necessary to its liberty. The committee on the constitution has thought that the king’s right to ratify the Constitution should not even be discussed.” And on September 11 the Assembly took no action when Guillotin asked for clarification of the king’s power to refuse consent to the Constitution. But this time Mounier was more explicit: “The Constitution needs no royal approval, for it is anterior to the monarchy.” And Mirabeau, by approving the way in which a “religious veil” was thrown over the whole difficulty, implicitly affirmed the sovereignty of the constituent power.

A few days later the Assembly granted the king a suspensive veto in legislation. The Right regarded the decree of August 5–11 as a legislative enactment, not a constitutional matter. To dispel the equivocation Barnave and Le Chapelier on the twelfth, declaring explicitly that the king’s approval was not required for the decree, proposed that he be requested simply to “promulgate” it. Mirabeau argued forcefully that the decree was constitutional in nature and so not subject to royal sanction. The debate was turbulent, and not concluded until the fourteenth. But the Assembly drew back, deciding to submit the decree for the king’s approval.

Its reserve may have been due to negotiations then in progress behind the scenes on the subject of the veto. The patriot party had agreed to allow the king a suspensive veto on the understanding that in return he ratify all the August acts. Thus the “veil” would not have to be lifted. But on the seventeenth the king gave a procrastinating answer, concluding, after many detailed observations: “I approve the greater number of these articles and will sanction them when they are drafted into acts of legislation.” It was in vain that Le Chapelier, Mirabeau, Guillotin, Robespierre and the duc de La Rochefoucauld pointed out that all that had been asked of the king was promulgation.

On September 19 the Assembly passed a motion of du Port requesting the king to order “publication” of the decree. This the king granted two days later, but his message made it clear that publication was not tantamount in his eyes to promulgation, still less to ratification, and that it did not render the decree enforceable at law.

Finally on October 1, when a committee on financial planning was appointed, Barnave proposed that it should not begin work until after ratification of the constitutional decrees, and Mirabeau persuaded the Assembly to submit these decrees for the king’s “acceptance.” The Right took the position that such acceptance, being obligatory on the king, did not commit him to formal approval. But if a legal solution thus seemed nearer, there was no progress in fact; for the king might in fact refuse acceptance as well as ratification. The same conclusion emerged as on the question of the executive veto. Could Louis XVI have been replaced with someone willing to accept an accomplished fact unreservedly, the basic constitutional issue could have been covered up; but since this was impossible there was no way open except to coerce him by a new mass uprising, and such was the origin of the “October days.”

Division of the Patriot Party

The king was no doubt encouraged in his resistance by the dissensions becoming evident within the national party, many of whose members had
in fact the aristocratic party was dreaming of revenge and regarding all who favored compromise as traitors.

On the king's veto, on the other hand, the patriots were by no means intransigent. Barnave on September 2 proposed a suspensive veto, the will of the legislature to prevail if three successive assemblies took the same stand. Necker, told in advance, gave his assent. The purpose of the move is clear. Having refused concessions to the aristocracy, the patriots were trying to form an alliance with the king, granting him a suspensive veto over legislation, with an implicit understanding, which Barnave made clear to Necker, that Louis XVI would give up all opposition to constitutional laws, and would sanction the August decrees immediately and without comment. As for Necker, he saw his own popularity disappearing. The patriots denounced his financial policies, which were based on agreements with the bankers; the Assembly, in voting a loan of 30,000,000 livres on August 8, had authorized an interest rate of only 4½ per cent, which the financial interests considered insufficient, so that the whole operation came to nothing; on August 27 a loan of 80,000,000 was authorized, but further details were left for decision by the minister, so that the responsibility for failure would be his. Probably Necker hoped to get back into the good graces of the patriot party by his agreement with Barnave on the veto. But his difficulty was still the same; he could not control the king's actions. The Assembly adopted the suspensive veto on September 11. But the king, as has been seen, withheld his sanction from the August decrees. The patriots thought themselves swindled. Herein lay another cause of the "October days."

Irritated at such a miscarriage on their plans, and unable to overcome the king's passive resistance, the patriot party came gradually to believe, as Loustalot wrote in his journal, that a second "dose" of revolution was necessary, and that to avoid further difficulties the king should this time be brought to Paris, where fear of the revolutionary populace would have on him the effect of a perpetual intimidation. As early as August 26 the academician Dussaulx, a member of the Paris commune, observed to Augeard as they went by the Tuileries: "When the king is living there, this business may be settled. It was a great error on July 17 not to keep him in Paris. The king's place of residence should be in the capital." When Augeard objected that no one had the right to tell the king where to live, Dussaulx replied, "He can be forced, when the good of the country is at stake; and we will come to that." On September 25 the marquis de Villette, in the Chronique de Paris, declared openly that the king must be transferred to the city, and Mme. Roland was of the same opinion in writing from Beaujolais at the beginning of October. But the decision did not depend on the Assembly. Only a mass movement could seal the ruin of the Old Regime.
Judicial disputes were of course of no interest to the people, nothing would be obtained from the king without coercion, and nothing would be obtained without popular pressure. The kingdom of France was at this time under a popular uprising, with the Jacobins leading the charge. The National Guards, supported by the populace, staged a rebellion against the king. They took control of the Tuileries Palace and arrested the monarch, Louis XVI.

The National Assembly, under the leadership of Maximilien Robespierre, declared the king guilty of high treason and ordered his execution. The king was tried and sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal on January 21, 1793.

The Popular Activation

Chapter 14

The Popular Activation
If there was popular excitement over the veto, it was because the veto was regarded as a means of blocking the Revolution. For the "day" now in making the Paris national guard a nucleus of organized force which had previously been lacking. It is true that the small Paris element had become excited. La Fayette had declared on July 15 to create paid companies, and with the Conseil de Vigilance, the subscription list of 6,000 men, of which the French Guards were incorporated. The voluntary company, with a strength of 24,000, and the obligation to purchase a uniform, restricted enrollment to the comfortable classes. But at this time their main function was still to assure the victory of the Third Estate over the aristocracy, and the paid guards, the grenadiers, were men of the 14th July.

It seems likely that the Paris agitators and the patriot group within the National Assembly had some kind of understanding, though neither the circumstances nor the terms are known. Though there is no positive proof, it appears that Mirabeau also, though working for the Orleans faction, had some part in what was preparing. He thought, like Seyès, that the king would easily resolve itself if the king acceded to the requests of the sans-culottes. He thought, like Seyès, that the crisis would easily resolve itself if the king acceded to the requests of the sans-culottes. In any case the Orleans machinations were merely auxiliary, and the same events would have occurred had the duke never existed. La Fayette's role has also been called in question, and we now know that he may have had something to do with it. But so far as the king was concerned, it was the result of the rebellion of the sans-culottes, that business, the taking of the Tuileries, the calling of the government to its charge, that business, the taking of the Tuileries, the calling of the government to its charge, and the final result of the reign of terror.

The sans-culotte, the popular enthusiasm, the political circumstances thus appear as the essential cause of the October Days, the same thought arises as in 1792.
connection with the Days of July, that without the economic crisis the upheaval would have been less profound. The women who were the first to march on Versailles, on October 5, complained above all of scarcity and excessive prices.

The Revolution had greatly increased the number of people out of work. Foreigners, nobles and wealthy persons had deserted the capital, bound for the frontiers of the provinces. Some 200,000 passports had been delivered in less than two months. Money was growing scarce; emigrants took with them all the cash they could; merchants with fluid funds transferred them to banks in England and Holland, or left standing to their credit abroad the payments made for goods exported from France. The luxury trades, and business in Paris in general, were badly hurt. Many servants had been dismissed. Charitable institutions were more than ever unable to relieve the unemployed, and the one at Montmartre had been shut down.

Bread remained dear at thirteen and a half sous for four pounds, and could with difficulty be had even at this price. The harvest was good but time was needed to thresh it, and since the granaries were empty there was no available grain. Peasants stayed away from the markets because of the disorders; every town and even every village tried to keep grain supplies for itself, or hold up shipments as they went by. At Paris the authorities met with unheard-of difficulties in procuring the indispensable provisions from day to day, and in milling what they did obtain since the rivers were low and the air exceptionally still. In September interminable lines formed at the doors of the bakers.

The working class, stirred up in addition by the political agitation, began demonstrations to demand employment or increases of wages—the tailors, wig makers and shoemakers on August 18, the apothecaries' assistants on the twenty-third, domestic servants on the twenty-ninth, the butchers on

September 27; and meanwhile the bakers' men threatened to desert their ovens at any moment.

The people, as always, raised the cry against hoarding, and were driven by sheer want, as in the preceding spring, to turn against the aristocracy and the government. The former were blamed for the obstructions and difficulties in the food supply. The authorities were distrusted because the old rumor of a "famine plot" was now more widely credited than ever, now that Le Prévôt de Beaumont, who had been put in the Bastille for spreading the story, was enjoying his liberty. Marat and another pamphleteer named Rutledge carried on a vitriolic campaign against Necker as an accomplice of the food hoarders. To go to Versailles, smash the aristocratic conspiracy and lay hands on the king and his ministers seemed to be a remedy for the popular sufferings. Once more the economic and political crises came together in their effects.
Chapter 15

The October Days: Confirmation by Violence

An incident created by the imprudence of the Court gave the signal for insurrection. On October 1 the officers of the Bodyguard gave a dinner for those of the Flanders Regiment in the opera house of the château at Versailles. At the toasts the health of the nation was purposely omitted. The royal family appeared and made the circuit of the table, wildly acclaimed, while the musicians played Grétry's popular air, O Richard, O mon roi, l'univers t'abandonne. In the hall and outside it, convivial spirits wandered about making menacing gestures and provocative speeches. The national cockade was insulted; someone cried, "Every man take the black cockade, that is the best one!" Marie-Antoinette declared herself ravished on receiving a delegation from the National Guard a few days later, for black was the color of Austria, hence her own. Ladies of the Court meanwhile distributed white cockades, white being the Bourbon color.

Paris learned of the banquet on Saturday, October 3. The insult was taken to announce a new move against the Assemblies and against Paris. Marat advised the concentration of cannon at the Hôtel de Ville and powder at Essonnes. The district assemblies went into permanent session; the Cordeliers district, on Danton's initiative, ordered prosecution for the crime of lèse-nation of anyone wearing any but the tricolor cockade. The Commune was urged to demand the removal of the Flanders Regiment. It forbade the wearing of any emblem except "the cockade of red, white and blue."

On Sunday the fourth a crowd swarmed at the Palais-Royal. Women were unusually numerous and declared their intention of marching to Versailles the next day; they were particularly vituperative against the queen. The National Guard broke up these assemblages, but listlessly and without conviction. That the morrow would be stormy was obvious. Yet La Fayette took no special precautions.

On Monday groups of women from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the public markets gathered at eight in the morning before the Hôtel de Ville. It was not by chance. A popular movement, if concerted, however imperfectly, supposes, if not a single head or directing committee, at least a number of organizers; but their names and activities in the present case have escaped us.

These women demanded bread. Bailly and La Fayette being absent, they lost no time in deciding to go to Versailles. They invaded the Hôtel de Ville, which was practically unguarded, pillaged it for arms and invited a man named Maillard to lead their procession. He was an active member of the "Volunteers of the Bastille," composed of the combatants of July 14 organized in military fashion. Probably he had not foreseen the present movement in the light of a feminine demonstration, for he tried to parley; in vain, however, for he finally yielded. On the way many more women joined the first, willingly or by force. In the rain, to the number of six or seven thousand, if we can believe Maillard, they set forth by way of Sèvres, where the shops were plundered.

Toward noon grenadiers appeared at the Hôtel de Ville, where there remained only a few laggards, who were dispersed.
But when La Fayette at last arrived the guardsmen sent him a deputation to declare that they too wished to go to Versailles to avenge the insult to the cockade. This time the political aspect of the movement became apparent. "The king is fooling us all, you included," cried a guardman. "He should be deposed; his boy should be king, and you should be regent. Then things will go better." Meanwhile the tocsin was ringing through the city, the district assemblies were meeting and the National Guard was pouring into the Place de Grève shouting, "To Versailles!" On horseback at the door of the Hôtel de Ville La Fayette harangued the multitude without effect; he assures us in his memoirs that he was finally threatened with the lantern. Towards four o'clock the Commune authorized him to proceed with the march. Attached to him were two commissioners who had among other requests to invite the king to take up his residence in Paris. At about five o'clock at least 20,000 men, national guardsmen and others, took the road to Versailles.

At Versailles the Assembly had met in the morning, and the king had just announced, in reply to the request of October 1, that he acceded to the August and September decrees; but his adherence was conditional, for he observed that the Constitution could not be properly judged until it was completed, and that in any case it was essential for the executive power to remain "in full force in the hands of the monarch." The old discussion was launched again, Robespierre and Barère maintaining that the Constitution stood in no need of the king's approval, while Mirabeau once again asked for "acceptance" pure and simple. Mirabeau prevailed; the Assembly was still determined not to rend the veil. At four o'clock, before the deputation of the Paris Commune had left Paris, the women presented themselves at the doors of the Assembly, wet and bedraggled. Maillard was admitted at the head of a delegation; he complained of the food shortage and demanded removal of the Flanders Regiment, but said nothing of the king. The Assembly avoided compromising itself; it decided that after acceptance of the decrees its presiding officer, Mounier, should ask the government to take measures to provision Paris.

Louis XVI had gone hunting, as was his custom. The minister Saint-Priest, forewarned by private channels, had sent him a message and summoned the Bodyguard of some six hundred men, together with the Flanders Regiment, to the château. The king returned about three in the afternoon and met immediately with the council. The government still had no official information, for La Fayette had waited until two or three o'clock to dispatch his message. No one knew exactly what the women wanted, but at three o'clock it seemed easy to block their approach at the Sèvres and Saint-Cloud bridges, and three battalions of Swiss could arrive from Courbevoie on short notice. Saint-Priest, while favoring immediate action, added that the king had best retire as soon as possible to Rambouillet, where two hundred cavalrymen were stationed. The council supported him, though Necker objected, denying the reality of the danger, and protesting that civil war would ensue, with no funds available to conduct it. Louis XVI adjourned the council to consult the queen. At about five-thirty the women reached the gates of the palace, where they were stopped by the Bodyguard. Some were allowed to come in with Mounier and his colleagues to speak with the king, who received them graciously and promised grain for Paris, along with all the bread that could be found in Versailles. They withdrew delighted, but since they had nothing in writing the main body of women were annoyed and greeted them with threats, so that they were obliged to return and implore a note written in the king's hand. Some of the crowd then started back to Paris with Maillard. La Fayette's message had at last arrived, but since it had been written before the departure of the national guardsmen it naturally said
nothing of that occurrence. The king, rid of the women, thought himself extricated from the affair. The troops were ordered back to their barracks. As the Bodyguard filed out, about eight in the evening, there was some friction between it and the National Guard of Versailles, but the incidents came to nothing, and the Versailles guardsmen likewise withdrew. In short, the intervention of the women had accomplished nothing. The essential question had not even been raised.

Suddenly a little after nine two officers arrived, sent ahead by La Fayette from Auteuil. The council met again. This time no resistance could be considered. Though La Fayette had not said explicitly that the Paris guardsmen had come to take back the king, Saint-Priest none the less insisted on immediate flight, in which Mounier and the queen agreed, so that the king consented. Saint-Priest gave the necessary orders and set off on horseback for Rambouillet with a carriage containing his family. But he was soon overtaken by a courier; Louis XVI had changed his mind and decided to stay. Louis had been very hesitant in consenting to go, repeating with great repugnance, “A fugitive king!” Perhaps he feared to precipitate a civil war in which his most devoted followers might be the first victims. But it must be added that he was ignorant of the intentions of the new arrivals, and could think that the constitutional decrees were the only matter at issue; he might disarm the adversary by being the first to act. In fact, toward ten o’clock, he sent word to Mounier of his acceptance pure and simple.

The Assembly, in its Hall of the Menus Plaisirs, had meanwhile been invaded and was attempting to deliberate in an uproar. La Fayette arrived at eleven in the evening. After attending to the quartering of his forces, and making arrangements with Mounier, he went up to the château, where he was well received by the king. The commissioners from the Commune delivered their message. It was agreed without difficulty that the National Guard should occupy the outdoor stations at the palace, the Bodyguard those inside. Orders having been given to provision Paris, and the constitutional decrees having been accepted, the commissioners had no more to ask except the king’s removal to the capital. It was the first time during the whole day that this matter had been mentioned to Louis XVI. He gave no reply. The night was growing late, and a halt was called until morning.

The Assembly adjourned at 3:00 A.M. It alone had gained a substantial advantage from the day’s events, for the king had “accepted” the constitutional decrees and implicitly recognized that his “sanction” was not needed. Once again a mass movement had assured the success of a juridical revolution. Probably the majority was content. But the Parisians had not incommoed themselves for so little: the aristocrats might again lay hands on the king; the Assembly itself seemed lukewarm and lethargic; the business must be ended by bringing the king and the deputies to Paris and putting them under surveillance by the people.

Since many of the demonstrators had found no place to spend the night, several hundred milled at six in the morning of October 6 about the palace gates. One was found open. The courtyard was invaded and fighting broke out. A soldier of the Bodyguard was put to death; a young workman was killed by a shot; a second guard was massacred. The mob reached the staircase leading to the queen’s apartments and got as far as the anteroom, where they were pushed back by the Bodyguard, several being killed or wounded. The queen took refuge with the king.

The National Guardsmen had done nothing to keep the invaders out. Tardily they came in to help stop the fighting, and, taking up posts indoors, managed to clear the château. La Fayette, who had slept at the Hôtel de Noailles, appeared in turn, reconciled the National Guard and the Bodyguard.
and showed himself on a balcony with the royal family. The crowd, at first undecided, finally broke into applause, but cried, “To Paris!” without budging an inch. There could be no more illusions: after a few minutes the king yielded. At the same time he asked the advice of the Assembly, which replied simply that it was inseparable from the king’s person, which in turn amounted to a vote for transfer to Paris.

At one in the afternoon, to the sound of cannon, the National Guard led off the procession, carrying a loaf of bread on a bayonet and followed by wagons full of wheat and flour, decorated with foliage and escorted by burly market men and by women, some seated on the horses and cannons, and carrying branches adorned with ribbons. “It looked like a walking forest, with the iron of pikes and musket barrels gleaming in it,” wrote a witness. Next in line came the grenadiers with the disarmed Bodyguard in their custody, then the Flanders Regiment and the Swiss, then a carriage in which rode the king and his family, with La Fayette prancing beside it. They were followed by carriages bearing a hundred deputies chosen to represent the Assembly. In the rear came more National Guardsmen, and the crowd.

All plodded through the mud. It was raining, and the dark came early. The people, insensitive to the gloom of the day, appeased and confident for the moment, thought only of their victory and burst into songs and jests. They were bringing back “the baker, the baker’s wife and the baker’s boy.”

Bailly welcomed the king at the city gate and conducted him to the Hôtel de Ville, where he was harangued by various speakers. Not till ten at night did the royal family enter the Tuileries, deserted by it for over a century. The Assembly took its time about following; it decided on October 12 to move on the nineteenth, and after sitting in Paris for two weeks in the great hall of the Archdiocese, installed itself on

November 9 in a riding school near the Tuileries, which had been hastily remodelled for the purpose.

At the moment no attention was paid to the flood of émigrés driven from France by the October Days. Nor was there any alarm at seeing the patriot party undergo its first amputation, by which the moderates, vanquished along with the aristocrats, were thrown definitely into the opposition, with Mounier, their leader, throwing up the game and retiring to his home in Dauphiny, from which he soon moved on into foreign parts. Although all evidence showed the king to be henceforth the prisoner and hostage of the Revolution, there was again a kind of understanding that, withdrawn from the influence of the aristocratic conspiracy, he was now in agreement with the Assembly. During the first days the population showed him signs of attachment. No one dreamed that the Revolution was barely beginning. And, after all, the popular feeling was not entirely mistaken, for the days of October, by securing ratification of the decrees of August, had consecrated the demise of the Old Regime beyond hope of revival, and at least the Revolution of 1789 was over.