

CHAPTER XXIV

FROM IMAGINED COMMUNITY TO BUREAUCRATIC NATION-STATE

I

The transition from revolution to dictatorship, initiated in France, has become something of an established model; it at least applies to the two major revolutions of the twentieth century, the Russian and the Chinese. In all three cases the appearance of dictatorship as sequel to revolution appears as the consequence of rapidly changing circumstances acting on the overwhelming conviction ('messianic democracy') which launched the revolution. It is a causal sequence which, following Talmon's pioneering work,¹ a number of students of modern revolutions (Hobsbawm, Skocpol and Dunn, for example) seem roughly agreed on, however unwilling they are to settle for any particular causal explanation of revolution itself. First of all comes revolutionary zeal - a conviction about the overwhelming virtue, rightness, rationality of the political beliefs and purposes one has come to share with one's fellow-revolutionaries. Revolutionary zeal is then, as they see it, confronted by unexpected changes of circumstance, some of which may be favourable but others, in the nature of things, are at least obstructive and at worst hostile - or are construed as such - but which revolutionary zeal can, by seizing the right opportunities, either overcome or turn to advantage.

The dynamics of the process are in no sense exclusive to political revolution. John Dunn quotes Guicciardini, who pointed out more than four centuries ago that the traditional context is religion: "The pious say that faith can do great things, and, as the gospel tells us, even move mountains. The reason is that faith breeds obstinacy. To have faith means simply to believe firmly - to deem them almost a certainty - things that are not reasonable; or, if they are reasonable, to believe them more firmly than reason warrants.... Now, since the affairs of the world are subject to chance and to a thousand and one different accidents, there are many ways in which the passage of time may bring unexpected help to those who persevere in their obstinacy. And since this obstinacy is the product of faith, it is then said that faith can do great things."²

But if the process is not specific to political revolution, neither is it quite so straightforward as Guicciardini - or contemporary scholars - have made out. Opportunism rules, but what appears

¹ J.L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, Secker & Warburg, 1952. Two more volumes developed the same theme - *Political Messianism* (1960) and *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution* (1981) - but the major impact was made by the 1952 volume.

² John Dunn, *Rethinking Modern Political Theory*, C.U.P. 1985, p.95.

by hindsight to be opportunism guided by an overall strategy rooted in the faith which may move mountains may also manifest itself in the opportunism which enables one to climb or to circumvent them. The opportunism so often credited to the leading figures of revolutionary movements, whether political or religious - the ability to shift direction or seize the initiative at the right moment - does help forge alliances, rally existing supporters and recruit new ones, but it may, and usually does, also mean changing goals so as revive the religious faith or revolutionary zeal of the initial phase, and so maintain momentum. This makes it again possible to go on to 'do great things' - but rather different things from those that were first thought of.

This is critically important. Historians did in the past tend to read actions and events as if they contained their own explanation - were processed by some mechanism possessing its own superhuman and unreadable logic. Some actually spoke of 'the logic of events'. More recently, history has often been taken to be a matter of interpreting the mental and social structures within which actions and events are conceived and are born. But neither the 'loom of history' nor the study of mentalities or social structures is enough. Events and actions are the driving force of historical development as well as manifestations of structural change.³

Once again, the French Revolution, together with its Napoleonic aftermath, is the great exemplar. It is possible to regard what happened in the twenty-five years from 1789 to 1814 as a geological shift in response to changes in underlying mental and social structures. But they are changes which are not merely evinced in actions and events but initiated and furthered by them. It is, I believe, simplistic to describe what happened as a new alignment of state and society, or to accept the change as one stage of the four-hundred-year long growth of centralised governmental authority in France and western European countries generally.

This is the thesis (essentially Tocqueville's) subscribed to by most of the distinguished company of historians and social scientists who contributed to a collection of studies sponsored by the Social Science Research Council in the United States.⁴ The words 'realignment' and 'centralisation' miss the main point, or at best obscure it. The realignment of state and society and the progressive centralisation of the one and the increasing class-consciousness we ascribe to the other are part of a much broader process of reconstitution. For all the diligent explorations of political historians, constitutional theorists, and philologists, the last quarter of the eighteenth century marks the first time in history that the generality of people - in America and France to begin with, and then in the countries of Western Europe - became conscious of 'the state' as an entity, in something like the way people became conscious in the Middle Ages of 'the Church', and as many of them had in the previous hundred years or so become aware of 'society'. It was part of the large-scale transformation of moral awareness, vision, aspirations and - notably - assurance which was, again, a much bigger affair than the two revolutions, French and Industrial, that Karl Polanyi labelled 'The Great Transformation'. Of course the origins of the two words, 'state' and 'society', lay far back in the medieval past, but their descent was far more a matter of genealogical mutations than of unchanging tradition. Their new significance has to do directly with the new significance attaching to equality and to individualism, with the specific connotations of 'democracy' and

³ See A.Jardin & A.-J. Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction, 1815-1848*, C.U.P., 1983, p. 203.

⁴ *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (ed. Charles Tilly), Princeton Univ. Pr., 1975.

'rights', with the manifestation in more and more grossly material form of concepts now legible as 'the competitive market' and 'possessive individualism'.⁵

The climactic stage of the whole process was the demolition of the *ancien regime*: the first and greatest achievement of the Revolution. The system of institutionalised privilege, the structure of quasi-autonomous institutions, internal customs duties and tolls, privatised administrative arrangements were all abolished in a remarkably short space of time. Along with them went the facade of absolutism and the whole complicitous social system which lay behind that facade, and sustained it.

It must have seemed, in those early days, as if the new dispensation of individual rights and free market economics spelled out in the abolition of 'intermediary bodies', the feudal regime and internal customs barriers, would of itself generate social harmony and economic prosperity. Once free of all the encumbrances of the *ancien regime*, the society of free and equal individuals which would then emerge would find its way clear for the creation of appropriate administrative and judicial institutions. Indeed, in so far as there was a conception of the State in those early years, it seems to have been envisaged as a kind of insubstantial, non-institutional, fabric extruded by the unified nation of fraternal patriots which would of itself serve to protect and guarantee public order and individual liberty. While there was admittedly administrative and juridical work to be done, it was thought that a great deal of it (defined now in neutral, mechanistic, terms as functions rather than the offices, charges, or places of the *ancien regime*) could best be left to ordinary citizens acting as elected, unpaid, *citoyen-fonctionnaires* - a possibility which the demise of communitality in its medieval, let alone its Athenian, form, had put well beyond reach.

The conception of the nation as a patriotic fraternity generated its own special euphoria but barely outlasted the first year of the Constituent Assembly. Yet the shift in the content of the succession of political models of the individual citizen, of society, of the state, during the years of the First Republic is not quite the stumbling descent from the pristine virtues of August 1789 that is so often read into it. True, it is impossible not to register the gradual displacement from a central position of the moral reason which dominated the decisions and actions of 1789 first by political reason and then by ambition, self-interest and greed. But the experiences of the revolutionary years did not altogether erase basic faith in reason or in liberty, equality and fraternity.

II

So, while the early revolutionary model of individual, society and state and their relationships was modified and, at times, changed substantially, it was not a total, all-inclusive, shift. Parts got left behind, so to speak. The utopian vision of 1789 survived for some years as the formal, constitutional, basis of the relationship between the municipal authorities in Paris and the

⁵ Some of the considerations and arguments lying behind these assertions are examined by Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Gallimard, 1966 (Engl. trans. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970). See also V. Descombes, *The Barometer of Modern Reason*, O.U.P., 1993, esp. ch.2 - 'The Philosophy of the French Revolution'.

larger cities and their politically active citizens who ran the sections and at least monitored, at most dominated, the general councils of the communes.

Above all, though, the naive equation of freedom from political, legal and commercial constraints with social justice and economic prosperity - or at least the promise of them - left the road open to the construction of a new system of public administration which would ensure that freedom and utilise the surplus of social, political and economic energies resulting from it. Given the differences of view about the best way of defining - or realising - the new freedom, about the best way of defending it and of making the most out of the energies it released, the road was open to the tactical and strategic opportunism of individual political leaders and groups.

The first clear demonstration of the working of opportunism, and of the interplay of its tactical and strategic forms, came with the ultimatum to Austria early in 1792. Both the provocation and the declaration of war (in what has been called a 'nonchalant' manner) that followed is usually and easily construed as a call for national unity, but it was also, and not at all incidentally, both a rhetorical demonstration of the command role of the Legislature and, more surreptitiously, an invocation by the Girondins, who were the prime movers, of the nation as a whole as counterweight to the Jacobin-*sansculotte* alliance.

In ways totally unforeseen by the leading politicians who saw it as a way of solving the multiple problems of national disunity, the war itself exacerbated the difficulties it was meant to overcome. Nevertheless, from that time on, the patriotic fraternity that revolutionary zeal had inspired was first supplemented and then, to an increasing extent, supplanted by militant nationalism as the cement binding the people of France to each other and, from now on, to their political leaders and military commanders. In the same way, and serving the same ends, the equality proclaimed in the early years turned into the promotion of equal opportunity for advancement in the service of the state. Moves in these new directions went along with shifts away from old ones: traditional loyalties to Church, local and regional communities, and social class were made subordinate to the overriding claim of the nation - just as liberty, equality and fraternity had gone along with the elimination of intermediate bodies, 'feudal' dues and obligations, internal customs duties and of birthright and institutional privilege.

On the other hand, the sacrifices, hardships, and losses that came with war, and the increasingly exacerbated conflicts between the adherents, or protagonists, of the earlier and the later versions of the relationship between citizens and between citizen and state broke up the early consensus and buried the hopes of the first patriots. The Revolutionary Wars and the various resistance movements which accompanied them added more pressures. Rivalries, conflicts and outright revolts grew in number and ferocity. Each successive shift away from the model of social order envisaged in the pristine revolutionary ideals also left its mark, in addition to a residue of qualifying limitations and cautionary reminders.

As is often the case, the people who were most convinced by the rhetoric expended in promoting, expediting and defending these strategic changes of direction were those who uttered it. But there is an increasing element of deliberate obfuscation detectable in the changeover from the disinterested policy of liberation proclaimed with all sincerity in the first

year of the war. There was the blunt rejection of the explicit request for independence by democratic leaders in Belgium, followed by the decrees by which the territories on the left bank of the Rhine were annexed to form part of the 'Great Nation'. 'In the following years (1793-9), at successive upturns of the wars, "liberation", "reunion", and "sister republics" became the code words to describe the occupation, annexation or restructuring as satellite states of the entire left bank of the Rhine, the Low Countries, Switzerland, and all mainland Italy. Even the Muslims of Egypt were "liberated" by Napoleon (1798-1801).'⁶

The accumulation of problems on the home front and in the war in Germany, the Low Countries, Italy and at sea mirrored each other. So did the answers. Over the years, leadership in political and social change and in the conduct of the war was - naturally - assumed by 'those best equipped, by resources, education and capacity, to turn opportunities to good use, and to provide the social homogeneity and solidity on which the social fabric was believed to depend.'⁷ The way was clear for the triumph of meritocracy - for 'equality of opportunity' to displace 'equality' as a central principle of citizen rights. It also became increasingly obvious - especially to these new leaders - that the prerequisite for the achievement of all other aims was the provision of appropriate administrative and financial structures which would protect, and direct, civil society and so 'liberate' both individual and productive forces. Such structures took on more and more of the lineaments of modern bureaucracy (i.e., as defined by Weber), assumed more and more legitimacy and centrality, and acquired more and more powers to monitor, intervene, control and direct individuals and categories of people.

Much of the inequality re-built into the social structure of the new nation-state may be attributed to the military-administrative complex which absorbed so much of the nation's efforts and resources during the revolutionary decade. And while the dictates of reason prevailed throughout, the reasoning tended increasingly to become utilitarian, and indirect rather than direct - i.e., utility was to be maximized through action directed by rational institutions and systems of rules.

All the same, there was continuity. Later developments had their origin in the very first positive moves towards the building of a new institutional structure. More particularly, the birth - or at least the conception - of the military-administrative nation state can be traced back to the new dispensation of local government inaugurated in 1790. Starting from scratch, as virtually all of them had to, the *departements* had a clean slate to work on. It was in the *departements* that the first signs of a conception of administrative systems as modern bureaucratic structures is discernible. At its core was the image of the machine. In Boshers words, "In the age of the Watt steam engine and the Jacquard loom, of the Encyclopedie with its volumes of engravings of machines, of Newton's triumph over continental rivals, of La Metrie's L'Homme Machine (1747) - the age of the Enlightenment, in short - the word 'machine' had been increasingly used to describe administrative organisations. By the end of the eighteenth century the machine had become an obsessive image."⁸ was an image that tied in closely with two concepts which were of more instrumental relevance to organisation: function (sc. functional specificity) and separation of function (sc. division of labour). Most

⁶ S. Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, Routledge, 1991, p.15.

⁷ S. Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, p.12.

⁸ J.F.Bosher, *French Finances*, p. 296

departements set up bureaux to deal with taxation, public property, 'police' (i.e., public order), welfare and public works, as well as the standard sections for records, accounts and secretarial services.

III

By 1791, the same general principle was beginning to be applied in central government. While in this case the slate could hardly be made clean, a good deal of what had been on it was wiped off under the constitutional monarchy. All venalities were abolished; so were appointments as *premier commis*, though more slowly. In later years, salaries were frozen, cut down, or diminished by inflation. There was a decisive shift, led by the Treasury, away from the notion of general, all-round, ability (a notion carefully preserved, even cherished, in Britain over the next two hundred years) to the idea of competence trained for specific tasks, and away from what Anson, who had been a *premier commis* under Louis XV and XVI, called 'the old error' of believing that a similarity exists between all the functions of executive power, from the particulars of revenue and finance to matters of general administration. 'Overburdened with occupations which did not have analogous principles, ministers were led to decide everything precipitously and superficially.'⁹ So long as the monarchy lasted, other ministries carried on much as before, but the actual services they had discharged were put under elective bodies or Assembly committees. Most of the business left them was done by correspondence.

Real growth at the centre came with the revolutionary government. Beyond the well-publicised parts played by deputies as *commis* and in the committees of the Assembly, by the sections and the clubs, by the *agents nationaux*, and so on, the enormous and essential task of organising the nation for war was discharged by a host of minor technical and administrative personnel. The Committee of Public Safety had begun with a small office staff modelled on the Executive Council, but by the summer of 1793 it was operating with a number of sections whose secretaries (there were 26 *secrétaires commis*) were already assuming control of such things as arms manufacture. In November, 1793, when a new Director-General (Saint-Cyr Nugues) was appointed, the staff numbered 80; by Thermidor, nine months later, it was well over 500 strong. This was matched elsewhere in the administration, sometimes on a smaller, sometimes a larger, scale. By the spring of 1794, the Convention employed 500 clerical staff - and this was only a beginning. Both the Committee's and the Convention's expansion were dwarfed by the Ministry of War's 1,800.

C.H.Church, after emphasising how impossible it is to say with any confidence how big the new bureaucracy was, presents a series of estimates of the number of new posts created under the Terror ranging from 30,000 to 90,000. There must have been more than 15,000 *fonctionnaires*, all told, in Paris alone, he suggests, and 250,000 or more outside, if people elected into office and officials employed by local government and by the army or in its supporting services are included.

⁹ P-H. Anson, Speech to Constituent Assembly, 10 April, 1791, (quoted J.F.Bosher op. cit., p. 298)

The new bureaucratic order covered far more activities than anything attempted by preceding administrative systems. As well as being much bigger it also had greater authority and was far more successful in exercising it. 'It was also,' Church adds, 'much more consciously hierarchical, both in the way *la tutelle* administrative was developed by the Committee and also in its internal administration.'¹⁰ This graded formation, characteristic of modern bureaucratic systems, was entirely absent from government administration before 1789. Those who worked in it were not employees of the state so much as hired (and paid) by *chefs-de-bureaux, commis*, and others to serve them. When it comes to the system developed under the revolutionary government, one finds the Committee of Public Safety arranging its staff according to seven grades, and some form of hierarchic order prevailing in all the various branches of government administration.

Not surprisingly, there were fears expressed about the Revolutionary Government's having created its own sorcerer's apprentice. The new bureaucracy - now so big, both in Paris and in the provinces, so powerful and active, so hierarchical and centralised - seemed to be crammed with people whose chief loyalty was to their own section of the administration rather than to the political beliefs which animated the revolutionary government. Two different strategies were put forward for contending with the situation. Both were adopted. Saint-Just, arguing that the revolution was becoming ice-bound by the mass of functionaries it was creating, proposed - characteristically - the establishment of a *Bureau de Police Generale*. It was not particularly effective, apart from drawing more attention to the growth of officialdom, and in fact made things worse by generating boundary-disputes over the responsibilities of different ministries and bureaux. Carnot, on the other hand, and just as characteristically, was instrumental in getting the Ministry of War partitioned among a Commission for army organisation and movement and no less than six other commissions.

In a way, the two remedial measures encapsulate - and the two men, Saint-Just and Carnot, personify - the two basic beliefs which animated the Revolution and its aftermath: belief in the perfectibility of man, under the guidance of superior beings, and belief in the perfectibility of organised institutions.

Bosher, in some more speculative passages towards the end of his book, thought it 'not too far-fetched' to connect the bureaucratic revolution with the industrial revolution getting under way at the same time in Britain. He likens the arrangements by which individual accountants, financiers and magistrates managed the royal finances in their own houses with their own small bureaux to the pre-industrial domestic workshops with journeymen and apprentices working under the eyes of the merchant or workshop master; 'the French revolution gathered all the clerks into large buildings like factories, organised them in functional departments with proper division of labour there was, of course, no steam engine in a ministry to draw all the employees together, but the systems of central records and financial accounts rapidly acquired the characteristics of machines.'¹¹

Of course the comparison is too far-fetched. But he follows this up with a rather less commonplace and more challenging suggestion. He first argues against what he quite rightly

¹⁰ C.H.Church, *Revolution and Red Tape*, p. 95.

¹¹ J.H.Bosher, *French Finances*, p. 301.

(writing as he was in the 1960's) called 'the prevailing view' of the Revolution as 'fundamentally a struggle between two social classes, a capitalistic bourgeoisie defeating a feudal nobility.' It is hardly necessary to follow the arguments he has to contradict this view (whose reign is past, anyway). His own interpretation, which in effect represents the conclusion to the whole book, is not only nearer the mark but carries a much wider significance:

'I think that in the transformation of the financial system something happened that was more fundamental than the victory of one class over another. This was the invention of an administrative weapon for social and political domination.... In France, the industry of government underwent a revolution much earlier, more suddenly, more completely and on a larger scale than any branch of manufacturing at the time. Only changes in the industry of war could compare with it.'¹²

The two cases - modern bureaucratic government and modern military organisation - are not only comparable but contemporary and complementary. What is more, their concurrence also fostered, if it cannot be held entirely responsible for its genesis, a third process of change. This was the accelerated reconstruction of the hierarchic order of society to form new structures of inequality.

IV

The reward-system which provided the engine for the meritocracy officially promoted by the state in both the military and the administrative services was supplemented increasingly by booty and the profitable exploitation of occupied countries. The acquisition of so many and so varied resources required for the new model state meant that the winners in the meritocratic races were able to supplement public acknowledgment of their prowess by even more handsome - though surreptitious - rewards.

Nor can this particular development be assigned to the notorious increase in corruption and the general decline in public morality associated with the later years of the Republic. The process did accelerate under the Directory, but it is also true that it originated in 1794, at the time of the revolutionary government. After the victory of Fleurus, it became official policy to treat all occupied countries as enemy territory, in which the army was expected to live off the land; the Republic set up special 'extraction agencies' to deal with requisitioning in Belgium and South Germany. Not only so, but 'sister republics', like other occupied countries, were forced to pay tribute ('extraordinary taxes') as well as to maintain the occupying armies. Their contributions may well have amounted to a quarter of the total revenue of the Directory.

But this was only the beginning. Wherever French armies went, pillaging and looting accompanied requisitions and war contributions. Chronic inflation and repeated financial collapses for years after Thermidor brought disruption to the already inadequate supply arrangements for mass armies. This led to a return to private enterprise for army supplies and so to a tidal wave of abuses and corrupt practices perpetrated by the companies formed by

¹² J.H.Bosher, French Finances, p. 313.

bankers and speculators. The Directory went with the tide. It was more and more dependent on success in war to withstand political pressures and overcome domestic problems; and the war had to pay for itself. Even had it wished to do so, moreover, it was in no position to control its generals and army *commissaires*; Massena, Macdonald and other generals, and the army *commissaires* along with them, 'engaged in looting and exactions, which were protected by the corruption of politicians and Directors, such as Barras and Talleyrand.' Jourdan and Hoche argued for, negotiated or simply assumed a great deal of independence. Bonaparte went much further. With a smaller army, and instructions to limit his campaign to what amounted to diversionary operations in aid of what the Directory saw as the main thrust against Austria north of the Alps, he defeated Piedmont and, having neutralised it by leaving its territory intact and its king on the throne, went on to occupy Milan, drive the Austrians out of Lombardy, create the Cisalpine Republic, negotiate its recognition by Austria and then withstand four counter-offensives in succession. He wound up with the Treaty of Campo Formio which ratified all his Italian annexations. By 1797, he was able to claim his reward by having the army assembled for an invasion of England switched to an expedition to Egypt.

The national Treasury was eventually replenished - and the monetary system restored - by booty. By March, 1797, the government had received 10 millions from the army of Sambre-et-Meuse, and more than 51 millions from the army of Italy. This was just a beginning. The invasion of Switzerland the following winter, officially directed at wiping out the nests of royalists and British-paid spies harbouring there, had the added attraction of the 'immense treasures' said to be housed in towns like Berne. After the invasion, the city treasuries of Berne, Zurich and Basel were duly looted. At about the same time, Rome received much the same treatment, with the army let loose to pillage the city. When things settled down, a republic was set up, with all government posts, including the members of the legislature, nominated by the French. The deliveries of money, along with paintings, sculptures, jewellery and gold and silver to the Directory continued; one convoy contained hundreds of packages of books, manuscripts and jewellery looted from the Vatican.

The amount of booty which went to the government was more than matched by the depredations not only of the army and its generals but of government-appointed supply contractors and agents, who acted on their masters' behalf as well as their own. Barras and Talleyrand both did particularly well.

But the returns from military booty were not enough. Militaristic nationalism was supplemented by economic nationalism, and once again the starting point is the crisis year of 1794, when the revolutionary government was in control. The extraction agencies set up in Belgium and the Rhineland in that year and the generals and *commissaires* of later years were ordered to ship industrial machinery back into France, and even to break up machines which were producing goods in direct competition with French textiles.

V

There is about the whole ten years of the 1790's a feeling of a cumulative and irresistible drive towards a fateful or somehow predetermined end. The feeling almost certainly originates in the way, and the man with whom, the period ended; shopworn as it has become, the 'man of

destiny' title fixed on Bonaparte fitted him in a way that would be lacking in the case of any other historical personage, but the theatrical parallel does not stop there. The first five years represent the Aristotelian thesis, with revolutionary zealots compounding complex situations with the way they seized the opportunities presented to them. Half way through, Thermidor provides the crisis at the appropriate moment, and the situation is reversed. The next five years of lysis are taken up with the opportunist moves made by the 'post-revolutionary', 'bourgeois', republic - not only against those whom they saw as their former oppressors, the Jacobins, but against dissidents of all kinds - royalists, *sansculottes*, *chouans*, brigands, deserters, refractory priests and churchpeople (and the 'refractories' eluding conscription into the army) and in defence of an increasingly beleaguered, ineffective and divided political elite. Brumaire, the final stroke of strategic opportunism in the political history of the Revolutionary era, comes as climax to the drama that occupied the whole decade.

Bonaparte's intervention must in fact have appeared to most politically informed contemporaries as a providential solution for a situation which had become impossibly problematic. It was certainly not a victory for any of the parties to the disputes which had led up to the crisis. He was not, to all appearances, a member of any of the groups directly involved. He arrived out of the blue, having replicated the triumphs of his Italian campaign of three years previously against a distant and more exotic background. The '*machina*' out of which this welcome '*deus*' had emerged was the army, now more and more outstandingly the vehicle of France's own manifest destiny. To have the most successful and popular of all the army's generals in supreme control of the government of France promised release from the governmental disarray of recent years and, in the longer term, from the perpetual turmoil of extremist and often violent politics in which the French people had been immersed since 1789 - plus the hope of some reward to which the tribulations they had endured and the sacrifices they had made over the same period of time had somehow entitled them.

It is also, in this connection, difficult to imagine Brumaire meeting with the success it did without its appearing at the end of a ten-year series of dramatic changes of political fortune. Just beforehand, during the turbulent months from June to November 1799, matters were brought to a head in a series of confrontations between the executive and the legislature. In the event, both sides lost. Once again, the executive demonstrated both its incompetence and its consuming self-interest and the legislature its increasing weakness, disarray, and readiness to resort to extra-constitutional, even conspiratorial, measures.

There is of course something obnoxious about attaching the idea of theatricality (with the implication of unreality and pretence the word carries with it) to the terminal episode of the Revolution - except that there is an inescapable feeling that it must have looked like that to contemporaries. It would otherwise, for example, be impossible to treat as anything other than a piece of staggering effrontery the proclamation which began the new era: 'Citizens, the Revolution is established on the principles which began it: it is ended.'

Opportunism entered in on every single occasion - opportunism, both tactical and strategic, being in the present context reserved for actions which did in fact turn out to influence 'the course of history'. It is quite distinct from the kind of political manoeuvring by individual politicians which has come to be known as trimming. The distinction becomes obvious enough

when one turns to the individuals involved; if Bonaparte was the prince of opportunists, Talleyrand and Sieyes were arch-trimmers.

It has also to be remembered that, in one sense, the coup of Brumaire amounted to no more than the army's claiming the leading role that was its due. The significance of the army had been evident from quite early on. The central figures in what were denounced as Jacobin plots during the final months of the Directory were two generals, Bernadotte and Jourdan. Counterplots were mounted by the leaders of the administrative meritocracy. In the end, the conflicts were resolved in the person of General Bonaparte. He had landed in France exactly a month before the coup to universal acclaim as national hero and double victor of the Italian and Egyptian campaigns; in both places he had demonstrably acted as the government, not just its representative. With the ground well prepared beforehand by his brothers, Lucien and Joseph, the hostile reception given to his address to the 'lower house' (the Council of Five Hundred) on November 9 was no more than a contretemps. The Council's own guards, backed by Murat's troops, cleared the chamber, and the consulate was established.

VI

Proposals for the constitution of the new Consulate were first put forward by a small group, headed by Sieyes, on the principles he enunciated of 'trust coming from below, authority from above'. In particular, there would be nonsense about election to office: 'No one should be appointed to any office by those who will be subject to his authority'. Short and obscure, as Sieyes said it should be, it contained no declaration of rights, nor any mention of liberty, equality and fraternity. There was a rather vague reference to the liberty of the individual in Article 77, and another article mentioned the right to petition, but only to make it clear that it was reserved specifically for individual persons.

There were to be three consuls. In Sieyes' proposals, the Second Consul would be responsible for domestic, the Third for foreign, affairs. The First Consul was to have the position of 'Grand Elector', responsible for the appointment of ministers and senior officials, civil and military, at national and local level.

Bonaparte would have none of it, seeing clearly enough that the position of First Consul would approximate, in fact, to that of a constitutional monarch in the English fashion, or of Louis XVI at the end of 1789. He made fairly drastic amendments to the proposals, so as to make his own paramount position perfectly clear. Article 42 of the Constitution, accordingly, states baldly that 'the decision of the First Consul shall suffice' on all executive, legislative and judicial matters. All legislation was to be initiated by the consuls, and they alone could authorise amendments. They were also to be responsible for framing the budgetary proposals which would be embodied in an annual finance law. Since the other two consuls were merely advisory, this meant that Bonaparte had the first and final say in the making of law and the organisation of state finances.

Three bodies - Senate, Tribunate, and *Corps legislatif* - replaced the two legislative chambers of the Directory. The Senate, nominated in the first place by Sieyes, and appointed thereafter by cooption, was to be responsible for approving 'the constitutional propriety' of legislation and

for nominating the judges of the Supreme Court of Appeal, the commissioners of the national accounts, and (until 1802) the consuls. The Tribunalate was to discuss legislative proposals but not vote on them. The *Corps legislatif* was to vote on the proposals but not discuss them.

All three were bereft of any legislative or political power. The Senate was formally independent, with its members (60, rising to 80) appointed for life, but proved itself unfailingly complaisant. The Tribunalate was composed of 100 members nominated by the Senate. A few of them (notably Benjamin Constant) did show signs of dissent early on; it was accordingly purged (and Constant exiled) in 1802, had its powers curtailed in 1804, and was abolished in 1807. The *Corps legislatif* of 500 members (also nominated by the Senate), whose function was to pass or reject bills without debate, proved its worth by hardly rejecting any.

There is a striking difference between the pretentious unreality of the constitutional facade designed for the Consulate (and continued under the Empire), on the one hand, and, on the other, the hard-headed specifications set out for Bonaparte's autocratic supremacy and the calculated and ample provisions for rationally organised administrative machinery and technical support.

The constitution of *L'an VIII* amounted to a design for dictatorship on the lines, essentially, of military command, with all power, legislative as well as executive, concentrated in the hands of one man. The two amendments of 1802, when Bonaparte was declared consul for life, and 1804, when he was proclaimed Emperor, did little to change the overall structure of the new regime after the treaties of Luneville and Amiens had established peace throughout Europe. Short-lived though the peace settlement proved to be, the new regime nevertheless continued to receive the support of the great majority of Frenchmen, and willingly implemented by the new elite of professionals: lawyers, army officers, academics, politicians and *fonctionnaires*, many of whom had pasts stretching back to the Constituent Assembly.

Bonaparte was not only empowered to initiate laws but also to nominate ministers, prefects, magistrates and the *maires* of the larger municipalities. It goes without saying that appointments to the upper ranks of the army and navy were in his hands; the chief influence in appointing members of the three chambers of the 'legislature' was also his. But the main instrument through which Bonaparte chose to exercise sovereign power was the *Conseil d'Etat*, whose members, once again, were appointed by him. The mere fact that Bonaparte often took it upon himself to preside over its meetings and to participate in its discussions shows how centrally important it was to the system of government. The broad spectrum of the past political affiliations of its members also attests to its importance; many had been Jacobins, royalists or Girondins. Bonaparte is said, nevertheless, to have deferred to its judgment on one or two occasions. It numbered anything from thirty to fifty members, chosen by the First Consul and distributed among five sections: finance, legislation, army, navy (and shipping in general) and internal affairs. All legislation and administrative regulations had to be submitted to it for discussion and appraisal, as were proposals for decrees and even enforcement orders later on. The First Consul would choose two or three members to present new legislation - after it had been passed through the *Conseil d'Etat*. It also operated officially as an administrative tribunal.

Although the *Conseil d'Etat* is often referred to as 'in principle' a resurrection of the *Conseil du Roi* of the *ancien regime*, it was in some respects less than that, and in others a good deal more. In fact (not surprisingly) it bears a greater resemblance to the general staff of an army than to what we recognise as a cabinet or royal council. Its chief function was that of 'communication head' or 'information centre' - i.e., to receive information from different sources, compare, collate, coordinate it, reduce it to what was relevant to particular purposes, supplementing it from past experience of their own or on record where it was useful and possible to do so, and arrange for the results to be delivered in appropriate form to appropriate destinations. Supplementary to this all-important function, the provision of advice and, sometimes, guidance would also be increasingly available from the Council. It had of itself no executive power, although later on a number of administrative responsibilities - for anything from education, colonies, or arts and sciences to customs, roads and bridges, religious sects - were handed over to members of the council; after a few years, these amounted to a sizeable collection of mini-ministries.

One of the more significant innovative ideas which went into the formation of the *Conseil d'Etat* was the appointment of '*auditeurs*'. Beginning as administrative aides-de-camp in attendance on the *Conseil d'Etat*, they were young men (20 years was the minimum age) with an annual income of at least 6000 francs, with appropriate educational - and linguistic - qualifications (and also the right social connections). They were in effect trainees for administrative office, liable to be called on to serve on the staffs of generals, civil administrators and 'advisers' in occupied territories, to assist prefects and judges, or to occupy any of the multitudinous junior posts generated by the rapidly growing Empire.

The French model of administration was not only centralised and hierarchic; it also served as a career ladder. Becoming an *auditeur* meant a firm footing on the first rung of the ladder, and while this was not the sole mode of entry, *auditeurs* came in time to provide a sizeable proportion of the men appointed as prefects, consuls, ministry officials and to the senior ranks of the staffs representing different aspects of the central administration in the French provinces, occupied territories, and satellite states.

The creation of an officially constituted corps of apprentice administrators anchored the principles of meritocracy firmly in the new administrative structure. Like so much else under the new dispensation, it was modelled on established army practice - this time dating back well before the time of the Republic. (The headquarters staff of armies had for a long time had to find room for an indeterminate number of young noblemen who were attached - again, in somewhat indeterminate fashion - as '*aides*'. The practice was maintained in the French army under the Republic and the Empire but, as one might expect, in rather more disciplined and demanding fashion.)

The number of Ministers was not fixed, but all were chosen by the First Consul and were responsible to him. Their position was not very different from what it had been since 1789; they were simply executive agents - '*commis*'. There was no provision for them to meet as a body, and any of their decisions that concerned legislation or decrees had first to be submitted to the *Conseil d'Etat*, where ministers, although present, were allowed no voice in its

deliberations to begin with, although after 1802 they were, along with a few senior government officials, given the right to intervene.

Getting the new constitution ratified presented some problems. It was hardly possible to have it discussed and voted on by the two Chambers (the 'Five Hundred' and the '*Anciens*') of the previous constitution, after the events which had finished it off. The solution was sought in a plebiscite. On the face of it, the 1000 to 1 majority that actually voted in favour seems more than satisfactory, except for the fact that the majority represented a tiny fraction of those qualified to vote. It was in fact so tiny that Lucien Bonaparte, who was in charge of the arrangements, saw to it that several thousand were added to each department's return, and so doubled the 1,500,000 affirmative votes actually cast for the official returns - something which remained concealed until quite recently.¹³

Bonaparte offered the people of France stability and authoritative control, declared his desire for reconciliation on a number of occasions, gave them hope in his own person for future success in war - and was lucky enough to justify that hope six months later at Marengo.

Even so, the French people seemed, after a year or two just as irreconcilably divided as they had ever been. Extremists were hunted down just as vigorously. Emigrés were allowed back, but outbreaks of 'royalist brigandage' in the south-east were suppressed by a reorganised gendarmerie acting under the direction of military commissioners. Bonaparte, along with Fouché, stopped the arrest and deportation of a number of Jacobins - but an even larger number were expelled the following year. Measures of religious toleration were enacted, but a resurgence of *chouannerie* in the west was forced into surrender, and many of its leaders arrested and shot.

Consolidation of the new regime came, eventually, with the Concordat Bonaparte signed with the Pope in 1801 and the favourable peace treaties he concluded with Austria in 1801 and Britain in the following year. It could be that the repatriation of the French armies had something to do with the rather rapid stabilisation effected by the peace, but it is also some weight to be given to the influence of all those who had experienced, and survived, the twelve years of upheaval. At all events, three and a half million votes were cast in favour of his appointment as First Consul for life. By then, the Revolution was a thing of the past. The cause which inspired it, blunted by war, diverted by the Revolutionary Government, dissipated by the Convention after Thermidor, and subverted by the Directory, was abandoned altogether. In its place France was presented with a political despotism, a bureaucratized system of government, and a hierarchically ordered society.

VII

France had experienced existence as a nation in Benedict Anderson's sense of an 'imagined community' only briefly - for a year or so after July 1789. Under Napoleon, it was to achieve nationhood as an organised community. Government, national and local, would be by bodies of representatives elected by 'the people' - except that the form of election was carefully

¹³ See D.M.G.Sutherland, *France 1789-1815*, p.340.

controlled and the franchise excluded most of the people. And what government authority the elected assemblies had was strictly limited.

At the lowest level of the electoral system - the cantonal assembly - registered electors were '*notabilites communales*', a title reminiscent of the '*boni homines*' of medieval times. They were people who qualified as citizen-voters by reason of the value of their property or size of income: a more restricted category than any of the 'active citizen' electorates of previous years. The cantonal assembly chose from its members an electoral college, which elected the members of the electoral college of the *arrondissement*, which elected the electoral college for the *departement*, still the major unit of local government. The law passed early in 1800 made the *departement* subject to the authority of the prefect appointed by the government (i.e., Bonaparte) to act as its sole administrative authority. Within each *departement* there were four or five *arrondissements* each headed by a *sous-prefet*, again nominated by the government and, after 1809, usually an *auditeur*, a class which had by then greatly expanded in numbers.

At each level - canton, *arrondissement*, *departement* - the elections held were to elect not the members of the appropriate committee or council but a panel from whom members would be chosen by the proper authorities - ultimately, either the Senate or the First Consul. At departmental level, where the prefect ruled without any representative council, the electoral college was there to elect men with the right qualifications to the 'national list' of candidates from whom the Senate would choose the members of the *Corps legislative* and the Tribunal. (The electoral college system turned out to be one of the more durable parts of the Napoleonic regime; it lasted until 1848.)

The prefect was assisted by two committees, one, a *conseil general*, mostly for assessing taxes, and made up of reliable men chosen from the list supplied by the electoral college and appointed for fifteen years, the other a tribunal for resolving administrative disputes. The *sous-prefet* too had a committee to assist, with its members chosen from the list of candidates elected by their appropriate electoral college. The whole prefectural apparatus was supplemented by the officials appointed by two other centrally directed ministries, police and finance.

The police force was reconstituted and considerably enlarged under Fouché in 1804. It covered the whole enlarged territory of France, divided among four *arrondissements*, each with a member of the *Conseil d'Etat* at its head. Every *departement* and large city had its *commissaire*, with responsibilities which included those of latter day police forces but stretched well beyond them to the issue of contracts for street-cleansing and street-lighting as well as traffic control, surveillance of theatres as well as brothels. The *gendarmérie* were also at the disposal of the *commissaires de police*.

The ministry also had a second division which dealt with prisons - and with spies and informers, since the primary interests of the ministry, according to Godechot, were political: 'There is no doubt that the French Empire was the precursor of the modern police state.'¹⁴

¹⁴ J.Godechot, *Les Institutions de la France sous la Revolution et l'Empire*, p.530.

The reconstruction of the system of financial administration was largely the work of Gaudin - an 'excellent technician', according to Godechot. The poor returns from the direct taxes devised under the Directory were, he saw, the fault of the way their collection had been organised. The whole process was tightened up by what was now, under the new authoritarian regime, a relatively simple device. The receiver-general appointed in each *departement* was required to pay in a twentieth of the amount of tax due for the year by way of security; the amount subscribed in this way was used to pay out against any default on government bonds issued on the backing of the full amount of tax which the the same receivers-general had undertaken to collect. The receivers-general appointed were, naturally, among the richest men in the *departement*. Their efforts were backed up by a new corps of tax-collectors (also required to put down sums of money by way of security), replacing the previous collectors whose shortcomings in both honesty and competence had become notorious. In effect, what it amounted to was an efficient, well-organised, system of tax-farming.

Apart from this, the fiscal arrangements made under the Consulate and Empire hardly count as administrative - or financial - successes. Local customs duties, restored under the Directory, were multiplied. Commodities subject to excise duties also grew in number. The *Banque de France*, launched to provide a readily available source of public credit, had its crises, and was in any case never very successful, since its operations were confined for the most part to Paris.

But easy remedies were always available through increased taxes levied on occupied and dependent territories (which more or less met the financial needs of the army). In the last resort, too, there was the '*domaine extraordinaire*', an exchequer supplied with funds from the produce of conquered territories and from private property acquired at the time of peace settlements; these funds were entirely at the Emperor's disposal. Up to 1812, war was 'good business', at least for the government and its servants, rather than a drain on national resources.

This was just as well, because little or nothing was done to improve the French economy. The manufacture of luxury goods was restored to something like its pre-1789 level, and textile industries grew because of the blockade of English cotton goods (and the suppression of rival industries outside the frontiers of Greater France). The largest firm employed almost 8000 workers, although 7000 of them were homeworkers in and around Paris. But there were frequent shortages of supplies and the hazardous nature of business in wartime made for undercapitalisation; in 1810 the largest firm, mentioned above, had to be helped out with government loans. The biggest and most important industry of all, and the mainstay of the French economy - agriculture - suffered most; unimproved methods of cultivation, population increase, and the smallness of most peasant holdings meant that there must have been as much rural poverty in 1815 as in 1789.¹⁵

VIII

The codification of civil law, which Bonaparte was inclined to claim as his greatest accomplishment off the battlefield, was in fact the conclusion of a lengthy process of research and discussion initiated in 1791. It amounted to a synthesis of the various accumulations of

¹⁵ D.M.G Sutherland, *France 1789-1815*, p.384.

customary law which had obtained in different parts of France, Roman Law, which had been adopted in ad hoc fashion over the past three centuries, and the positive laws passed since the Revolution. It nevertheless shows the imprint of the new regime in the prominence it gave to property-ownership. This may owe its origin to the perception of a need to provide an assured legal backing for the large number of new landowners - many of them wealthy townsmen - who had profited during the revolutionary years from the sale of land confiscated from the king, the church, and condemned nobles or émigrés. What it also did was to provide a badge of superior standing rather more substantial than that of an aristocratic title - now becoming seriously devalued by the number of new titles created by Napoleon. (The situation came to be exploited after his time, when an increasing number of fictitious titles made their appearance. Throughout the nineteenth century, remarks Godechot, it was the title of "proprietor" that people boasted of. 'How many candidates for election, right up to 1914, claimed no greater qualification than that of "proprietor"?)

One other noteworthy alteration made to the structural ordering of society by the Civil Code was to reaffirm the subordination of women in terms of the law in general, as well as within the family. It should be said that it did no more than give legal backing to the longstanding resentment among political activists, particularly Jacobins, against the intrusion of women into public life and the threat that female militancy posed to male dominance in general. The feeling had been articulated in journals as long ago as the time of the Revolutionary Government.¹⁶ From now on, women were not to be accepted as witnesses to documents. A wife was totally subordinate to her husband, and, what was more, financially incapacitated in terms of law; the code made no provision for wife's earnings by way of wages, salary or trading profit. And while a wife convicted of adultery could be imprisoned for up to two years at the behest of her husband, the penalty for a husband was limited to a fine of up to 2000 francs.

But adjustments of the kind made by the Civil Code to the standing of individual men and the legal rights of women were of marginal significance only, so far as the overall strategy of the imperial regime and the purposes it was meant to carry out are concerned.

A good deal, perhaps rather too much, has been made by historians (by no means all of them French¹⁷) of the intellectual, cultural and stylistic leadership of France under Napoleon, but there is no doubt about the strenuous and persistent effort made to assert and maintain it.

The treatment of education is fairly revealing. Educational policy, after the neglect shown by the Legislative Assembly, the unfulfilled promises of the Convention, and the vagaries of the Directory, was reorganised in wholesale fashion under the Consulate and the Empire. A complex system of public education to be provided by the state was inaugurated in 1802 and later amended and expanded. But it was concerned almost exclusively with the production of an elite for the army and the administration.

A highly centralised system of schools and colleges, entitled the 'University of France', was set up under the direction of a 'Grand Master'. At the highest level were the *Polytechnique* (almost

¹⁶ See P.McPhee, *Social History of France 1780-1880*, pp.109-110.

¹⁷ See, for example, S.Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, pp.44-5, 215-19.

exclusively for entrants into the armed forces) and the *grandes ecoles* for mines, roads and bridges, etc., surviving from the years of the Convention. Supplementary provision was also made - or, more often, allowed to survive - for education in the sciences, in history, literature and languages, as well as in engineering, law, medicine, arts and crafts. The Faculties of Law, Medicine and the former Faculty of Arts, now split into a Faculty of Letters and a Faculty of Science, all survived, or were revived, with locations in Paris and the provinces; these Faculties were, however, concerned with examining candidates and awarding degrees, not with teaching. The College de France' in Paris was also kept going. So was the *Institut Francais* - or three parts of it, including the *Academie Francaise*; the fourth, for 'moral and political sciences', was wound up after Bonaparte had denounced it as a nest of 'ideologues', and its members dispersed among the other three.

Below the level of higher education and the prestigious institutions reserved for its products, the interests of the state were much more restricted. Again, there was a small elite of four superior boarding schools (*prytanees*) in Paris, Fontainebleau, Versailles, later moved to Saint-Cyr, where it became the military academy, and Saint-Germain (later Compiègne), as the principal academy for arts and crafts. Entry was reserved for the best scholars chosen from secondary schools, public and private, throughout France, and the regime combined military discipline, religious observances, and a curriculum in which Greek and Latin predominated.

The new *lycées*, which replaced the central schools of the Convention, made no pretence of providing secondary education for all. *Lycées* were for boys, and run under much the same strict regime as the *prytanées*. They were regarded with some suspicion and in some places shunned altogether by parents; in any case, apart from Paris, where there were four, fewer than half the *departements* had one. Primary education almost disappeared; teachers were very badly off, having to rely on contributions from parents for their pay; they were also obliged to perform menial tasks - cleaning out the church and the like.

There was no provision at all by the state for the education of girls - a deliberate omission, Napoleon being markedly uninterested. In fact, many of the deficiencies in secondary and primary education as a whole, for girls as well as boys, were made up by the church, with the support of religious organisations. Private secondary schools, in contrast to the state-maintained *lycées*, flourished under the Empire, even though the fees paid by parents were taxed. Private tuition revived, as did elementary teaching at the communal and parish level - so much so, in fact, that by the end of the Empire, literacy had actually improved overall.

The neglect of secondary and primary education by the state is in stark contrast to the ostentatious provisions made for scientific and cultural achievement, and rewarding it. Scientific pre-eminence and cultural leadership was treated as belonging to France almost *de iure*. Not only was 'the French political model, in its successive Revolutionary and Napoleonic incarnations, ... perceived by its representatives' as superior to and also to be emulated by other societies but, 'precisely because France saw itself as 'Europe's mentor, it seemed appropriate to many that Paris, the new Rome, the capital and heart of civilisation, should be enriched with the most significant of the artefacts of arts and sciences to be found elsewhere in Europe.'¹⁸ French recognition of scientific achievement became the supreme accolade. It was

¹⁸ S.Woolf, *Napoleon's Integration of Europe*, p.10.

in Paris, not Berlin, that Humboldt presented his findings from the first pioneering scientific expedition in South America; Volta was invited there to demonstrate his electric battery; even more strikingly, Humphry Davy went there from England (in 1813) at the invitation of the *Institut* to receive the gold medal awarded him.

What has to be remembered is that it was seen as important for the stability of the regime - outside France even more than within it - for there to be evidence of France's civilising role, offsetting the less beneficent features represented by their contemporaries in the commissioned ranks of the army, and by the 'other ranks' who made their presence felt in distinctly uncivilised fashion. The administrative officials who served the prefects in the provinces of Greater France and the generals and governors in the rest of the Empire constituted a body of intelligent, competent, ambitious, and socially acceptable men. Prominent among them were the young *auditeurs*, especially in later years, when their numbers were considerably increased. Their presence in the salons of Paris and the many capitals of Western Europe which drifted into satellite orbits during the first decade of the new century was physical demonstration of intellectual and cultural superiority. They were living advertisements of the civilising mission of the French nation, embodiments of the principle of equality of opportunity which inspired it and of the rewards which meritorious performance in its service could bring.

All the same - it goes without saying - the army had first, and biggest claim on the rewards of merit. A new nobility was created; the vast majority of the new titles went to Napoleon's marshals and generals. The Legion of Honour conveyed an extra mark of distinction for the most highly prized qualities; in 1814, more than ninety-six per cent of its 38,000 members were drawn from the military.

IX

To repeat: it is, I believe, a profound mistake to regard the Napoleonic regime as simply one further stage in the evolutionary development of the modern, centralised, state. The Napoleonic system was new - or as new as any new invention can be. There was a constitution, and a fairly elaborate one, but it was largely cosmetic, and treated as such. The realities of the system resided in the command hierarchies of the army and the administration, the meritocratic principle of promotion which applied in both, and in the virtually unchallengeable supremacy of the man at the head of it all. It was very far from the kind of governmental system which had served for centuries past. That had been more of a *bricolage* of bits and pieces of organisational machinery, most of them inherited from the distant past, some of them adapted for new purposes, and on rare occasions, in emergencies or under pressure from without, supplemented by devices imported from outside government but familiar and lying ready to hand. All the parts of the new system had been fabricated in the very recent past by the army and the machine-minded creators of the administrative system in the last years of the First Republic, and put together on foundations provided by the now dominant ethos of militant and militaristic nationalism.

The build-up had been extraordinarily swift. It all started out from the revolutionary base of liberty, equality and fraternity, out of which total sovereignty and governmental powers were

vested in all citizens, then in their representatives. Within two years, local government authorities were becoming organised roughly according to the lines of the division of labour (although more in the new *departements* than in the municipal communes), and on top of this the need for functional specialisation was being urged by Anson in the Legislative Assembly. War and Revolutionary Government brought enormous increases of manpower into the government services, and the need for an hierarchic structure of authority became as self-evident in the administration as in the army, where appointment of officers by election, along with reliance on the self-dedication of volunteers citizens, was abandoned as unworkable.

By the time Bonaparte appeared on the political stage, most of the elements of modern bureaucracy had been engineered, and were virtually in place and working. Inequality and the authority of command had been reconstituted - but this time as principles of large-scale organisation, with 'liberty, equality and fraternity', the motivating force of the Revolution, reconstituted as 'equality of opportunity'.

Even though many of its features were already apparent in outline before the Consulate, the incorporation of a fully developed meritocracy makes the Napoleonic system the prototype of modern bureaucracy. If Augustus is to be credited with the creation of what is now understood as sovereignty, and Charlemagne with what is called feudalism, then Napoleon has some claim to be the architect of modern bureaucracy.

The centrally important characteristic of modern bureaucracies is that the people who work in them are at once both co-operators in a common enterprise and rivals for the material and the intangible rewards of successful competition with each other. The hierarchic order of rank, power and reward that prevails in them is at the same time a control system and a career ladder. And this dualism is now reflected in the order prevailing in modern society at large. There is a sense in which contemporary national societies are organised, cooperative systems. They are nevertheless organisations which depend for their survival on maintaining a flow of the best-qualified people to the top places in society, where the best talents are most needed. To do this, a complex system of educational and occupational promotion open to merit has been set up in such countries. But beyond this, it is essential, if members of society are to enter the race and compete as best they can, for them to regard success in society's terms as their highest personal goal. This indoctrination is of course very much strengthened by the material rewards on offer.

Cooperation in the interests of the organisation and competition which is intrinsically self-interested represent values which are often incompatible. But they are in fact nowadays treated as compatible. Both support for the agreed goals of an organisation and personal ambition are generally regarded as necessary components of the moral system on which society must be founded in the kind of social order we now have is to survive. It is this ultimate conjunction which 'legitimises' career success. While this may be admitted - albeit often grudgingly - in, say, the scientific or the academic world,¹⁹ there prevails everywhere a level of discourse in which both kinds of endeavour are acknowledged as valid and reconcilable, a level at which initiative and enterprise may be seen as serving both the interests of self and the organisation.

¹⁹ See T. Burns, "Micropolitics: Mechanisms of Institutional Change", *Administrative Science Q.*, Vol. 6, no. 3, Dec. 1961, pp.257-81.

The meritocratic form of bureaucracy created under Napoleon, operating strictly in the service of the nation - i.e., within the armed forces and the administration of France and the Empire - was the regime's greatest strength, the administrative bureaucracy serving as the social cement that held it together and the reward of meritorious performance by promotion the fuel that kept it working in the service of the Emperor and France.

Advancement by merit has a deeper significance. It lies in the fact that merit is rated in accordance with the requirements of the people at the top who are its chief beneficiaries and the criteria for its achievement are laid down by the people at the top of each sector of the system. 'Equality of opportunity' may be the publicly acknowledged principle followed, but it is they who judge. The new meritocracy reflected what amounted to an officially sponsored and publicly approved hierarchic ordering, headed by an amalgamation of elites and ranked in accordance with the deserts of those whom their superiors saw as most active in its service, however, not inherited position.

The new meritocracy reaffirmed inequality as a principle of social order, along with redefining its social and political significance. It has always, I suppose, been accepted that intelligence, social competence, manual strength and skill, courage - all the attributes which enter into 'social recognition' (esteem) - are distributed unequally. But the rating of each attribute relative to others, and the amount of esteem due to their possessor, was reckoned by traditional criteria and measures. This means that conclusions were arrived at communally - within more or less durable communities of sizes ranging from the family upwards to village, district, town, and so on, from congregation and abbey to bishopric and monastic order, from work group and occupation to commercial, financial and industrial system - in effect, throughout all the ramifications of social organisation. Naturally, there were changes, as in every traditionally governed aspect of social life, but they were gradual, and were developed within the relevant communities.

Now, new attributes supplanted the old ones, or were superimposed on them, to form a universal and officially sanctioned structure, validated in terms of promotion in the hierarchies of the army and civil government service and of increased prestige and wealth. The essentials of social organisation were unchanged, or at least stayed familiar, but the exchange-value of attributes altered a great deal, as did the actual division of (social) labour. Those qualities which displayed courage, decisiveness, diligence and perseverance or an enhanced mode of civilised existence - knowledgeability as regards scientific discoveries, material resources, administrative needs and the like, social and linguistic skill - were all highly regarded, and often rewarded. The most valued possessions were undoubtedly courage and intellect - or rather, intelligence applied to officially approved activities; money-making attracted few marks of merit.

It has also to be said that the new ordering of the French nation under Napoleon was hierarchic not only in cultural but also in genetic terms²⁰ - which offers a new perspective on the nation as organised community. Running through the official documentation and much of the literature of reminiscences and biographies of Napoleonic France are references to what is

²⁰ . S.J.Woolf, "French Civilization and Ethnicity in the Napoleonic Empire", Past and Present 124, 1989, p. 106.

clearly a set of generally accepted beliefs about the genetic - 'racial' - characteristics of its population. 'In 1800, *prefectoral* responses to a ministerial inquiry into France's regional nature and resources resorted to a dualistic imagery, privileging Paris over the provinces, plains over mountains, towns over country, bourgeois over peasant, north (except Brittany) over south, French over "patois", and men over women.' The southerner, for example, was reported to be "as variable as his climate, ... uncouth, brutal, lively, passionate, lazy or taciturn."²¹

What this section of the present chapter set out to establish is that the accommodation between cooperation in the interests of the organised community as a whole and self-interested competition, incompatible as they seem to be, lies at the heart of bureaucratic organisation. It also, I believe, opens up the possibility of regarding bureaucratic organisation as no more than an organised, rationalised, form of *clientage*.

X

There were four principal achievements of the French Revolution and Napoleon's empire. First of all came the transfer of sovereignty in theory from king to nation, in practice, to begin with, from the overriding judicial, executive and legislative authority of the king, his council and his ministers to the elected representatives of all enfranchised citizens, and then to the Emperor Napoleon and the officials he appointed. Secondly, privileges and rights as the possession of members of groups or categories or of corporate bodies were abolished. Third came patriotism, and with it the institution of the first national volunteer army.

None of these had much chance of survival in their original, fully-fashioned, form (patriotism was fairly swiftly converted to nationalism and conscripts replaced volunteers), but the fourth item: the creation of a fully bureaucratised, centrally controlled, administrative system in control of the state, did survive and flourish, although this had not been accomplished by July, 1794. Much of it was left for the Directory, the Consulate and the Empire to complete. But the foundations were there.

Napoleon's empire was the third in European history. The Roman Empire was the first, largest, best organised and most enduring empire of them all. It gave the idea of Europe as a community what substance it was to have, even though what geographical coherence the Roman Empire possessed derived from the Mediterranean rather than the continent of Europe; almost half of it lay in Asia and Africa. The imprint of the Roman Empire shows up clearly when it comes to the next case: the Carolingian Empire. Its extent was smaller and its lifetime insignificantly short by comparison. Nevertheless, it had, or was later endowed with, a remarkable orderliness and coherence, in contrast with the dislocation of social life, the breakdown and disruption of institutions, and the physical devastation and misery that had filled the three hundred years since the end of the Roman Empire in the West and which started up again after the death of Charlemagne's son. Little of this coherence came from the adoption of the Roman Empire itself as a model, though it was self-consciously reflected in the title of Holy Roman Empire. Adherence to Christian beliefs, membership of the Church

²¹ P. McPhee, *A Social History of France 1780-1880*, p. 83

and collaboration with it counted for a great deal, but the Church gained as much support from the Carolingian empire as it gave.

Charlemagne's empire lasted no more than two generations after his death. Its dismemberment by his grandsons at the Treaty of Verdun in 843, Lear-like in its tragic consequences as well as in its being tripartite, spelt its death as an organised empire, but Charlemagne's solutions to the problems of organising that empire left an enduring mark on the countries that had been part of it. For, in the end, the most substantial legacy of Charlemagne's Empire of the Franks was the idea of it. It came to be invested with a cultural unity independent of what institutions and stone-built churches and forts it left behind, one which added its own ghost to that of the Roman Empire which the Holy Roman Empire he founded was said to represent. For it was this Carolingian ghost of empire that was summoned up by Napoleon.

The interval between the organised conglomeration established by Charlemagne and Napoleon's Europe lasted just over a thousand years. Yet the connection between the two was very much in mind at the time, just as it had been in A.D.800 between Charlemagne's new empire and the Roman Empire. Napoleon is said to have thought of himself more as Charlemagne's successor than as heir to the Revolution, and the connection was given virtually official recognition in the formal pronouncement of the end of the Holy Roman Empire a year or two after Napoleon was declared Emperor of the French. And while the lifetime of the territorial empire established under the Consulate and expanded by Napoleon was even shorter than that of Charlemagne's, the mark it left on Europe and its institutional life was at least as profound.

The empire itself did not survive Napoleon's final military defeat. But the Revolutionary and Napoleonic legacy, like the Carolingian, consisted not in redrawing the map of Europe but in the alterations it effected in basic social organisation and in the forms taken by political action and political organisation.

There were, too, any number of other consequent or concomitant changes: the redistribution of landed property, a new and more equitable system of justice, an acceleration in social mobility, the liberation of internal trade and industry, and many more. There were also the negative achievements and the disasters: civil war, the Terror, the immersion of the whole of Europe in war, and, in the longer term, the growth of nationalist militarism. And there had been profound failures, like the virtual bankruptcy of the state and, apart from a brief interval, indifference to hunger and privation among the labouring poor. New and powerful vested interests had made their presence felt; they were founded on the possession of estates confiscated from emigré nobles and the dignitaries of the Church, from bishops and abbots to prebends and canons, to be used as 'national properties' which he could award as endowments to his new Imperial aristocracy.

Neither Roman nor Carolingian emperors saw Europe as an imagined community in Benedict Anderson's sense. When it comes to Napoleon's venture, it seems, a small intellectual, military, and politically-minded elite did see it as that. But if indeed the integration of Europe, to use Stuart Woolf's term, was the ultimate purpose of Napoleon's victorious campaigns, his resort to the crude and old-fashioned dynastic principle of installing members of his own

family as rulers was inept to the point of being self-defeating. The dependencies were dealt out around his immediate family; one brother was made King of Westphalia, another King of Holland (until 1810), and a third King of Spain; a sister was made Duchess of Lucca, a stepson Viceroy of the kingdom formed out of the north-western provinces of Italy, and a brother-in-law (Murat) King of Naples. The Habsburg empire remained more or less intact, apart from its Italian possessions, but Brandenburg and East Prussia were all that remained of the Prussia of Frederick the Great, and these almost went the same way as the western and Polish provinces after Tilsit.

Yet if Charlemagne came to be credited with the creation of what came to be called feudalism, then Napoleon has a rather better claim to be the architect of modern bureaucracy. The greatest strength, and most enduring legacy, of Napoleon's regime was the development and expansion of the new meritocratic bureaucracy. For while the military victories were the necessary premise and condition of the French presence, it was the bureaucratic structure that held it together. Promotion up the hierarchy of command as the reward of meritorious performance provided the fuel needed for the bureaucracy to work.

The new dispensation having been tested out in France, by 1808 it had spread throughout the much enlarged France which incorporated the Netherlands, both Holland and what is now Belgium, the southern states and the northern and coastal region of Germany as far as Lubeck, and, in Italy, the kingdom of Rome (with Napoleon crowned king in 1805), which comprised Tuscany and the Papal States as well as Piedmont, Parma and Genoa, together with the Illyrian provinces. Then there were also the dependencies: the Grand-Duchy of Warsaw, Westphalia, Naples and Spain, and the confederations of Switzerland and of the Rhine.

The elite class that staffed it had emerged from the Revolution. Under the Directory, to begin with, then with increasing confidence under the Consulate and Empire, they spread their ideals of progress and civilisation to every region of Europe touched by French arms. Although the claim to be spreading civilisation and progress may seem easy to dismiss as little more than an ideology which might serve to justify, or at least legitimise, conquest and imperialism, it does hold good in some respects.

In the first place, the French administrators and their intellectual allies were confident that they had elaborated scientific methods that allowed them to understand and govern the mechanisms of society. They were, after all, the product of the same practical rationality as the metric system which preceded and the *Code Civile* which accompanied them. Such convictions lingered after the military collapse of the Napoleonic regime, and flourished thereafter. Statistics, utilitarianism, administrative science, and a professional bureaucracy became typical aspects of the development of the nineteenth century state, supported by the new, and burgeoning economic and social sciences that demanded an active presence of the state, irrespective of its constitutional base.²² Prussia took the lead in this development, even before the collapse of Napoleon's empire.

²² See S. Woolf, "Statistics and the Modern State" *Comp. Studies in Society and History* 31, 1989.

More speculatively - but, if correct, more important - is the part played by the spread of the 'art of conversation': that ability to create 'an atmosphere of consensus and harmony that, while playing down social inequalities among participants, emphasised sympathies and affinities.'²³ To begin with, it now seems clear, it was the product of a deliberate attempt by a succession of cultivated members (mostly women) of the French aristocracy. There is even a founding mother: Madame de Sevigny. 'Renaissance conviviality had opposed private life to public life; but with the art of conversation different oppositions were in play: the life of the court was seen as opposed to the life of the *ville*; royal absolutism was opposed to civil society.... Their political ambitions thwarted by the modern and centralised monarchy, above all that of Louis XIV, the privileged classes took refuge in a variety of pastimes - *loisirs* - establishing their own sphere of freedom outside the court, in their own social world, providing a model to be followed by writers and prominent members of the bourgeoisie'. After 1715, under the Regency, though, 'it was to become an independent power, often at odds with the interests and political strategy of the monarchical state. At this point Paris attracted admiration throughout Europe because, as Fumaroli writes, Europe saw in Paris the realization of "that genius of civilized leisure, of spiritually exalted repose that since antiquity has been the pinnacle of political and philosophical success."²⁴

After the Revolution of 1789, the barriers separating the private world of the salon from the public world of politics were broken down. But this did not mean the extinction of the art of conversation, or of the exhilaration of displaying knowledgeability and *savoir-faire* as well as *galanterie* and amiability. It was seized on by the new men (and women) of the late Republic and Napoleonic period and exploited almost in theatrical terms as the appropriate milieu for displaying both the new arts of government administration and social science that the French army had brought with it and the new liberal, critical, humanism cultivated in Germany, England and elsewhere. The significance of the changeover is ratified in exemplary fashion by the fact that the outstanding *salonniere* was Madame de Stael (who spent most of the whole period exiled from Paris), the prototypical *haute bourgeoisie* daughter of Necker, banker and director-general of finance at the time of the Revolution.

All of which is at odds with (and plays down, a little) the premonitory whiff of the twentieth century's totalitarian regimes that this account of the Napoleonic system could otherwise give off, especially when one Godechot's remark, noted earlier, on the Napoleonic regime as the first 'police state' is added in. Talmon, it is worth mentioning, saw the origin of totalitarianism in Rousseau's writings, the 'revolutionary improvisations' of the Jacobins, and the Babeuf conspiracy at the time of the Directory. There is a connection, of course, but it is a great deal more complicated, and involves many ambiguities and far more in the way of events and actions - including, among much else, the constitution-making, the formation of mass political movements, and the wholesale development and expansion of organisational techniques and means of public control that make up so much of nineteenth century history.

Still, the tendency of the elite-governed regime of Napoleon's day was the reverse of the declaration of political faith uttered by his nephew, Louis Napoleon, to the effect that 'one can only govern with, not against, the masses.' Even after twelve years of revolutionary fervour

²³ B.Craveri, Talk!, Review article (trans. T.Parks) in New York Review of Books, 20.1.2000, p. 60.

²⁴ B.Craveri, Talk!, Review article (trans. T.Parks) in New York Review of Books, 20.1.2000, p. 61

and republican administrative reconstruction, the new ordering of the French nation under Napoleon faced a deep-rooted communal and regional particularism. Its most obvious expression was in linguistic differences: to the Flemish of the north-west and the Breton and Basque of the west and south-west the German of Alsace and the Italian of Nice had been added since 1790. And even the central provinces stayed divided between the dialects of 'Languedoeil' in the north, and 'Languedoc' in the south, a linguistic division which remained alive until the end of the nineteenth century (though largely because of the artificial respiration provided by poets like Mistral). Peter McPhee refers to "the ethnic minorities who made up a majority of the 'French' nation", but goes on to deal with the 'profound impact' that 'the Revolution and the Empire had on collective identity, on the francisation of the citizens of a new society.'²⁵ For the new administrative order of France, especially under Napoleon, saw this particularism as something it had to contend with, something founded on what amounted to genetic differences.²⁶ Running through the official documentation and much of the literature of reminiscences and the biographies of Napoleonic France are references to what is clearly a set of generally accepted beliefs about the inherited - 'racial' - characteristics of the different sections of its population. 'In 1800, *prefectoral* responses to a ministerial inquiry into France's regional nature and resources resorted to a dualistic imagery, privileging Paris over the provinces, plains over mountains, towns over country, bourgeois over peasant, north (except Brittany) over south, French over "patois", and men over women.' The southerner, for example, was reported to be "'as variable as his climate, ... uncouth, brutal, lively, passionate, lazy or taciturn."²⁷

McPhee's conclusion is that while the Revolution and the Empire everywhere had a profound impact on collective identity - the Francisation of the new society - the full triumph of the nation-state would require economic and cultural integration, something which it took the rest of the nineteenth century to accomplish. Louis Napoleon's remark, quoted earlier, could be taken as registering the half-way mark.

Napoleon followed Charlemagne so far as to organise all the territories subject to him under one administrative system; this applied to Belgium, Holland, southern Germany, Lower Saxony, which were made part of Greater France, with northern Italy and Illyria in the subordinate Kingdom of Italy. Outside Greater France itself the same principles of administration, of public finance, and civil law were to be followed as applied within France.

The rewards that bureaucratic order after the French fashion could bring to governmental administration in other countries were obvious enough, and the contrast with what had prevailed in them before strong enough, for it to be imitated, adapted, and put to use outside France, and even outside the Empire. For there were elements in the politico-administrative affairs of different countries which pushed the process along.

The twenty-two years of almost continuous war between France and the European monarchies began in 1792 with the invasion of France by the armies of Prussia and Austria. They were joined by Britain and, rather briefly, by Spain in the following year, but the years between

²⁵ P.McPhee, *Social History of France, 1780-1880*, Routledge, 1992, p. 98.

²⁶ S.J.Woolf, "French Civilization and Ethnicity in the Napoleonic Empire", *Past and Present* 124, 1989, p. 106.

²⁷ P.McPhee, *Social History of France 1780-1880*, p. 83.

1792 and 1812 (apart from a brief interval when Russian armies intervened and drove the French back north and south of the Alps) were filled with French victories and conquests on the mainland of Europe. Britain's navy kept her safe from invasion, but the money she poured into her allies was largely wasted - until Napoleon's failure in 1812 roused Austria and Prussia to combine with Russia in a final effort which put an end to his empire.

But there are discontinuities which disrupt what we ordinarily regard as a single whole period. The revolution which had been the real as well as ostensible reason for the campaign begun by Austria and Prussia (and supported by Britain) had lost much of its significance after the coup of Thermidor (July-August, 1794). In the second place, the election of Napoleon as First Consul, followed by his coronation as Emperor of the French translated the conflict into the traditional monarchist terms of territorial invasion and conquest (by a usurper, what was more) versus resistance (by legitimate rulers). And the final collapse after 1812 is almost predictable from 1809-10.

It is of course too much to expect the allied opponents of France to have recognised that the revolution had ended in the autumn of 1794. The King and Queen had been executed; France was still a republic; and the revival of monarchism, which by 1795 had become significant, the subornation of the Paris National Guard (now the 'Police Legion'), and the hopes of the forthcoming election putting an end to the Republic were all too confused for the allies (with the exception of Britain, kept better informed by its network of spies, which did make tentative offers of peace negotiations) to offset the invasion of Holland and the victories being won by Bonaparte in Italy.

Nevertheless, there had been a fundamental, and lasting, change. The relaxation, and then abolition (in December, 1794), of the price controls set by the law of Maximum (passed in September, 1793), followed upon the dismantling of the administrative apparatus created by the Committee of Public Safety under Robespierre. The inevitable sequel was a steep rise in prices (bread and meat remained on ration, but the amount of bread per person dropped from one and a half pounds to four ounces during the spring of 1795; on the open market, the price went up in the spring of 1795 16 *livres* in a single month; meat was virtually unobtainable).

In France, the riotous assemblies which were the inevitable response to the autumn and winter of near famine led, in April 1795, to open insurrection - led by women, again. By the end of May (*Prairial*) it had become armed insurrection. On the first day of confrontation the gendarmerie and gunners summoned to defend the Convention deserted to the other side, and the rioters dispersed peacefully. On the following day, the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, always regarded as the nucleus of *sans-culotte* disaffection, was surrounded by troops of the regular army, along with battalions of *muscadins* and supporters of the Convention from the western end of the city. The *faubourg* surrendered the next day, without a shot being fired.

"This time, the repression was thorough and ruthless. It struck at the leaders - or presumed leaders - of the insurrection itself and at the potential leaders of similar revolts in the future: to behead the *sans-culottes* once and for all as a political force it was thought necessary to strike

at the remnants of Jacobinism in the Convention and in the Sectional assemblies and the National guard."²⁸ It spelt the end of the Revolution.

It also marks the beginning of what was to become recognisably 'class war'. By October prices had risen so far as to threaten the well-being of the better-off citizens. The Paris sections had also been forcibly purged of former Jacobins; workers and artisans were excluded from the National Guard; primary assemblies to vote on the new constitution and to appoint electors for the new Assembly which was to meet in the autumn were already holding meetings, and the proportion of workers and artisans attending had declined quite noticeably. More significant still was the public manifestation of royalist sentiment; even among the lower orders there were cries of '*Un roi ou du pain*'. This was the setting for the outgoing Assembly's decree that two-thirds of the members of the new Assembly due for election would be chosen from members of the present one.

The decree was challenged by both sides: the revived, though much weakened, *sans-culotte* groups and their Jacobin leaders, and a large and growing number of *honnetes gens* - property owners and merchants. It was this second 'revolutionary' (virtually counter-revolutionary) crowd which took the lead, and which the army was brought in to subdue. This was accomplished when a crowd of some seven or eight thousand from the sections (mainly in the western districts, and now organised under avowedly royalist leadership) assembled to attack the Tuileries, occupied by the army. They were met by gunfire from artillery commanded by the hitherto unknown General Bonaparte - the famous 'whiff of grapeshot'.

When we come to the second consideration, what Stuart Woolf calls Napoleon's 'integration' of Europe must have appeared to contemporary governments as straightforward imperial acquisitiveness. Consolidation of the territories acquired followed the elevation of Bonaparte to Emperor of the French. But even before the catastrophe of 1812, there were signs of dissidence, even within France itself. The call-up for the army for the Russian invasion (which numbered 600,000 - less than half of whom were French) met with more resistance, and a greater number of *refractaires*, than previous conscriptions.

What could be regarded as an attempt to replace Napoleon's hegemony with a consortium of Great Powers after 1815 only underlined the extent to which the *ancien regime* of their eighteenth century predecessors had in large part disintegrated, beyond redemption.

In Prussia, for example, authority had been surrendered to ministers and officials in the last years of the eighteenth century, and the reform movement after the disaster of Jena and occupation by the French was led by officials. It is hard to imagine either development within the framework set up by Frederick William I and Frederick the Great, and it might seem, as Paul Frolich remarked, that absolutism, the creator of modern governmental organization, had become its victim.

Or had it?

²⁸ G. Rude, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* O.U.P., 1959, p. 155.

The turn of events at the beginning of the nineteenth century introduced a new and significant modification into the idea of the state which the Hohenzollern dynasty had created. In 1806, Napoleon virtually destroyed Prussia's army. Worse, "When the victorious armies of Bonaparte entered Berlin after the battles of Jena and Auerstadt, they were greeted at the Brandenburger Tor by representatives of the Berlin magistracy and the local merchants; city officials readily agreed to continue their services for the conqueror; and the burghers of Berlin served without demur in the national guard organised by the French. A similar reception was accorded the French in other Prussian towns; there were few signs of even passive resistance to the foreigner."²⁹

In the years that followed, (largely through the efforts of Stein, with the support, at the outset, of the Queen, rather than the King, of Prussia) a new and significant modification was introduced into the idea of the state which the Hohenzollern dynasty had created. In those years, Stein, Hardenberg, Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Boyen set themselves to the work of rebuilding the Prussian state and inspiring a sense of devotion to it among its people. But all of them were ministers or administrative officials, which meant that their proposals were subject to Frederick William III's approval. It also meant that any plans there might have been for constitutional reform were abandoned when reaction set in after the end of the wars with Napoleon. But a good deal was done, and much of it was the practical application of the lessons their new masters had taught them to the task of restoring the role in German and European affairs that Frederick the Great had won.

Reform, instituted from above, was directed towards creating support for the state. The totality of the country's resources, material and human, incorporated in 'the nation', was seen as an entity in which government, administration, army and people were fused into a single unit, purpose-built for executing the will of its rulers. It began with Scharnhorst's reform of the army, reduced (at Napoleon's insistence) to 42,000 men after Tilsit, and eased by the resignation of a large number of senior officers. Institutions and authority relationships were to be reformed or created so as to make it possible in the first instance to mobilise the nation for the 'war of liberation', but ultimately, and permanently, in the service of the state.

Just as significant for the future was the reform of the education system, initiated by Stein in his advice to the king, given just before his resignation (instigated by Napoleon) as first minister. The advice was to appoint Wilhelm von Humboldt, the elder of the two exceptionally gifted brothers, to the head of the administrative section responsible for the affairs of education and the church. He handed over church matters to an assistant, but 'during his brief tenure of office' (hardly more than a year)... 'left the mark of his personality on the whole school and university system of Prussia, and later of Germany.'³⁰

He had most to do with the reconstruction of the *Gymnasien*, the grammar schools, in which the study of Latin, Greek and mathematics was central, with a wide range of subsidiary subjects available for the promotion of general culture. (It was the *Realschulen*, concentrating

²⁹ G.A.Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 164-1945.*, O.U.P. 1955, p. 21.

³⁰ W.H.Bruford, "German Constitutional and Social Development, 1795-1830", *New Cambridge Modern History of Europe*, C.U.P., 1965, p. 286.

on useful knowledge, in accordance with Enlightenment principles, which had previously attracted most attention.)

But it was Humboldt's new University of Berlin which, intended simply to replace the University of Halle (now, after Jena and Auerstadt, in foreign territory), became regarded as his finest achievement. The function of a university, Humboldt claimed, was not to transmit knowledge but to develop, train and exercise the intelligence and judgment of students so that he could acquire the special knowledge required for a profession and confront his life's work with some kind of broad understanding of the world. In all this, the new University worked closely with the existing Academy of Sciences. Altogether, Humboldt may be said to have laid the foundations for the outstanding performance not only of German scientists later in the nineteenth century but for the lead in European industry established by Germany in the next.

To begin with, however, Prussia was alone in all this. The Confederation of the Rhine seemed to accept its existence as an invention of Napoleon happily enough. Saxony actively supported Napoleon after his retreat from Moscow in 1812; Poland had him to thank for its reconstitution as a separate entity (and willingly supplied troops for the 1812 invasion). Austria's attempt to break free from Napoleon's hegemony ended in July, 1809, at Wagram. Not surprisingly, Prussia stayed its hand until after Russia had demonstrated all too clearly the limitations of Napoleon's power.

Russia, which had intervened with much success in the Revolutionary War in the late 1790's, stayed aloof after its experience in the Austerlitz campaign. She agreed to participate in the Continental System, designed to block British Goods from the mainland (a blockade which had already proved fairly useless) but provided refuge to dissident Frenchmen, like de Maistre, and Prussians, like Stein. Contact with Europe by army officers (members of the French-speaking aristocracy, naturally) during the campaigns of Korsakov and Suvarov north and south of the Alps during Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt, and with Europeans in St. Petersburg helped the birth of a new liberal-critical spirit in the salons of the capital which was not actively discouraged by the new Czar, Alexander - at least until 1815.

Apart from Russia, the only continental state to resist Napoleon with any success was Spain, and here the story is at the opposite extreme from Prussia's. The 'enlightenment' of Charles III (who died in 1788) had been a 'government sponsored, government-censored, movement', confined largely to the 'paternalistic modernisers and enlightened patriots in the eighteenth-century sense of the term' among the ministers and administrative officials.³¹ Under his son, Charles IV, all relationships with revolutionary France were broken off by a *cordon sanitaire* which stayed effective even after the two countries made peace in 1795 (and later entered into a new alliance). Charles III's ministerial system was replaced by one in which one minister - Godoy, generally thought to be the Queen's lover - was supreme, but constantly opposed and sniped at by a miscellany of cliques and cabals in Madrid and the provinces. The crunch came with the 'Tumult of Aranjuez', early in 1808, when a 'mob of soldiers, peasants and grooms forced Charles IV to dismiss Godoy, found hiding in a rolled-up carpet'³². Within days, Charles was forced to abdicate in favour of his son, who became Ferdinand VII.

³¹ See Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*, 2nd. edn. O.U.P., 1983, p.71.

³² R. Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*, p. 79.

Ferdinand sought help from Napoleon, who was in Bayonne. His father went there too, hoping for help, this time in support of Godoy. Nothing could have suited Napoleon better. But what precipitated his decisions was the popular revolt of May 2 in Madrid. Officially, (i.e., according to instructions from Ferdinand) civil authorities and magistrates were to collaborate with the occupying forces, under the command of Murat. And so they did, in the days immediately following May 2. The civil authorities in some of the provinces, however, dithered until almost the end of the month, when the general assembly in Asturias, in the middle of one of its triennial meetings, took the lead of a general insurrection by declaring war on Napoleon. The country broke up into a miscellany of virtually autonomous municipalities and provinces under juntas (committees) of notables. Napoleon's troops invaded Spain. Ferdinand, kept virtually prisoner at Bayonne, was forced to abdicate, along with his father, in favour of Joseph, Napoleon's brother. Then, in July, a French army corps was defeated by the army of the Seville Junta at Bailen, and surrendered to it.

Of course, things changed as soon as Napoleon in person took a hand. Two years later, his brother Joseph was installed in Madrid. A Central Junta, made up of thirty-five delegates from the provincial juntas, saw its army suffer a disastrous defeat at Ocaña late in 1809, retreated to Cadiz, where, surrounded by French troops, it resigned. Its members were humiliated by local 'patriots', and finally imprisoned. It was succeeded in September, 1810, by a Central Cortes, made up of elected members from the areas unoccupied by the French and delegates sent from the Juntas in occupied towns and country districts, which established itself on the Isla de Leon.

This new Cortes set about framing a constitution, although its discussions were beset by conservative clerical and administrative magistrates and officials opposed to any departure from the pre-existing framework of laws and institutions. The constitution they drew up nevertheless asserted 'the sovereignty of the people' as its basic principle. The king, who had 'deserted' them, was left the appointment of ministers and some prerogatives, but his exercise of what powers he had was to be limited by supervisory bodies. Otherwise, the new constitution provided for the replacement of 'a clumsy taxational system, with endless regional divergencies' by a uniform income tax; the abolition of the confused administrative and judicial system of the old regime, and the 'bizarre quasi-federal structure of local government' to be replaced by a system of uniform municipalities and provinces.³³

It all stayed in abeyance until 1814, when the King returned and abolished it. But while the Spanish constitution of 1812 had no existence apart from the document on which it was inscribed, it lived on as monument to Spain's war of resistance, a perpetual reminder to liberal opinion not just of what might have been but of what might yet be achieved. It was the only clear manifestation of liberalism in Europe during the Napoleonic war. The fight against the French was maintained almost exclusively by bands of guerrillas; it was they whose incessant harassing of the French forces of occupation made it possible for Wellington's small army to win battles and evict the French from Spain. Spanish army generals contented themselves for the most part with bullying the Cortes.

³³ R Carr, Spain, 1809-1975, p. 98.

Britain, the most persistent and successful opponent of France over whole period from 1792 to 1815, prosecuted the war continuously, apart from a brief period following the Treaty of Amiens in 1802. This was no more than an armistice, imposed by the stalemate between two enemies, one completely victorious on land, the other equally so at sea.

During the 1790's, some sympathy for the Revolution had shown itself; it was not confined to poets like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Burns, and Southey, or to middle-class intellectuals like Priestley, Wilkinson, and Telford; some whigs and dissenters were also involved. When the excesses of 1793-4 had begun to alienate most of these, Jacobinism found support among the less well-off middle class and among artisans. In England, a shoemaker founded the Corresponding Society, with membership costing a penny a week. In Scotland, there was actually a Convention held in Edinburgh in 1793, with its own 'tree of liberty'; and there were proposals to hold another in 1794.

The local demonstrations directed against economic exploitation that occurred during the early decades of the Industrial Revolution were not very different in character from what had been familiar for centuries. By 1794, though, happenings the other side of the Channel put a much more frightening complexion on them, for the upper and middle classes, especially when leading spirits of the movement for Parliamentary reform began looking in that direction for support. One of them, Francis Place, is quoted by E.P.Thompson as 'saying that, as early as 1795, he saw the role of the working-class reformers as accessories to middle-class or aristocratic reformers in Parliament'³⁴ It was also in 1795 that the 'Two Acts' made it a treasonable offence to incite the people by speech or writing to hatred or contempt of King, Constitution or Government' and prohibited meetings of more than fifty people without notifying a magistrate - who was empowered to arrest speakers and disperse meetings. Their passing was attended by the most widespread and intense series of protests of the 1790's. They were also the last uprisings which can be called political until after 1815.

The response was to charge prominent agitators with seditious practices. In Scotland, the usual suspects were rounded up and the usual punishments - including one hanging - were handed out; a leading unitarian was sentenced to seven years' transportation. But in England, while a number of leading figures were charged with treason, all were acquitted; a charge of treason had to have the support of evidence of intention to use armed force.

Pitt thereupon brought in legislation specific to the need as he saw it. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. A Seditious Meetings Act was followed by a Treasonable Practices Act. The application of this new repressive legislation was left to local magistrates, whose local knowledge made them more effective, as well as convenient, agents. But the collapse of resistance to France in Europe, the failure of the British landing of a small army of *émigrés* at Quiberon and the threat of a French invasion of Ireland probably did more to quell popular agitation for reform than the threat of condign punishment. The heavy defeat in 1797 of a motion by Grey, one of Fox's disciples, in support of a resolution for a uniform household franchise, the redistribution of seats from corrupt boroughs to counties, and three-year parliaments put an end to the movement for parliamentary reform - a movement which Pitt himself had actively supported soon after he had become prime minister in 1784. It was, in the

³⁴ E.P.Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Gollancz, 1965, p. 139.

circumstances which now prevailed, no more than a forlorn gesture; in Trevelyan's words, the Whigs, 'having nailed their colours to the mast, proceeded to desert the ship'.

Not that meant the end of public agitation; but it was industrial rather than political. Again, repression was seen as the answer. In 1798 newspapers were put under the close supervision of magistrates. The Combination Acts made all gatherings of men to claim shorter hours or increased wages subject to summary trial before two magistrates - which usually simply meant that employers became judges of their own men. This did not see the end of disturbances; in fact they increased until the end of the war and well beyond, when they were brought in to support a revived reform movement.

Elsewhere in Europe, the countries immediately north and east of France had been invaded shortly after Fleurus and the fall of Robespierre. Belgium, Alsace and the Rhenish provinces were annexed outright, after some differences of opinion between the Directors and army generals, while Holland and Switzerland were turned into the Batavian and Helvetic Republics. Bonaparte's Italian campaign ended with the annexation of Savoy and Nice; Piedmont followed. Venice, together with its mainland provinces, was ceded to Austria at the treaty of Campo Formio, but the rest of Lombardy ended up as part of a new Cispadane, later enlarged as the Cisalpine, Republic. More 'sister republics' followed: Genoa and the north-east coast became the Ligurian Republic; the Pope was removed to Siena, and the Papal States renamed the 'Roman Republic'. Further amalgamation followed after Bonaparte had himself declared Emperor.