

since his last visit to the country, and much of what had happened he could not understand.

In England Paine was associated with the extreme Left, but in France his associates were already becoming the Right. The Girondists, with whom Paine was associated, represented the bourgeoisie of France who viewed the Revolution as their property to be used for their profit and interests. They did not believe in a truly democratic government, and were mainly concerned with keeping the Revolution in check so that the common people would not have too much of a voice in affairs of state. Meanwhile, they were not averse to lining their own pockets through speculation, profiteering and sheer corruption. They frequently mouthed revolutionary slogans, but their conduct indicated that these were merely words. They used Paine and his reputation as a spokesman for the common man for their own purposes, and on more than one occasion pushed him forward to defend a program that they did not dare to advocate openly.<sup>18</sup>

Paine does not appear to have understood much of what was taking place behind the scenes in France. For one thing, he knew nothing of the language; for another, he had never experienced a movement as advanced as that represented by the Jacobins, led by men like Marat, Robespierre, and Saint-Just. Nor for that matter did he fully grasp the changing character of the revolution after 1792. He did not, for example, see that a dictatorship of the people was necessary to save France at a time when the reactionary forces in Europe were uniting with counter-revolutionary elements inside France to destroy the revolution. Nor did he fully grasp the fact that the French Revolution was not and could not be merely a duplication of the American Revolution, for the simple reason that the French masses were fighting to overthrow the burden of centuries of oppression and tyranny, and were compelled to meet the power of reaction throughout Europe in their efforts to achieve their goal.

Paine's difficulties in France came quickly. He arrived in Paris on September 19, 1792, just after the September massacres during which many of the Royalist conspirators in Paris had been executed. Three days later the Convention, responding to the demand of the Parisian masses led by the Jacobins, proclaimed the Republic. On September

<sup>18</sup> For an excellent analysis of the role of the Girondists together with several penetrating comments on Paine, see Albert Mathiez, *The French Revolution*, New York, 1928.