FROM LIBERALISM TO RADICALISM:
TOM PAINE'S RIGHTS OF MAN

BY GARY KATES

In a fundamental sense, we are today all Paine's children. It was not the British defeat at Yorktown, but Paine and the new American conception of political society he did so much to popularize in Europe that turned the world upside down.
—Jack P. Greene*

Thomas Paine's pamphlet, Rights of Man, stands as one of the fundamental texts of modern democracy. Written during the stormy days of the French Revolution, the pamphlet became an instant success throughout the European world, selling some 200,000 copies in two years, making Paine the era's best-known revolutionary writer. "I know not," John Adams wrote in 1805, "whether any man in the world has had more influence on its inhabitants or affairs for the last thirty years than Tom Paine."1

One of Paine's most cherished purposes was to convince readers that the various political changes affecting late eighteenth-century Europe and America were all part of a coherent and rational development towards a better world. "It has been my fate to have borne a sable in the commencement and complete establishment of one revolution (I mean the Revolution of America)," he wrote to his French constituents in 1792. "The principles on which that Revolution began, have extended themselves to Europe." Despite obvious differences, Paine's vision unified Philadelphia merchants, British artisans, French peasants, Dutch reformers, and radical intellectuals from Boston to Berlin into one great movement: "it is the great cause of all; it is the establishment of a new era, that shall blot despotism from the earth and fix, on the lasting principles of peace and citizenship, the great Republic of Man."2

In his person as well, Paine seemed to embody the unity of an era

* Jack P. Greene, "Paine, America, and the 'Modernization' of Political Consciousness," Political Science Quarterly, 93 (1978), 92. I wish to thank John Martin, Char Miller, Linda Salvucci, Dena Goodman, Lynn Hunt, Tom Crain, Gayle Fendleton, and Lloyd Kramer for their helpful suggestions. An early version of this paper was presented to the Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, Atlanta, 1986. Funds for research were generously provided by the Faculty Development Committee of Trinity University.

1 John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, 29 October 1805, quoted in David Freeman Hawke, Paine (New York, 1974), 7.


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of universal revolution. Born in England, where he lived the first half of his life and later sought radical change, Paine was, with Lafayette, one of the very few activists to have played significant roles in both the American and French Revolutions. On the laurels of his writings, Paine was the only Anglo-American elected to the National Convention. More important, Paine himself later insisted that his entire life was devoted to the same democratic principles. If we believe Paine, he brought his ideas for representative democracy with him from England in 1774 and his ideas changed little during his tumultuous political career. "It was to bring forward and establish the representative system of Government," he wrote a year before his death, "That was the leading principle with me in writing that work [Common Sense], and all my other works during the progress of the revolution. And I followed the same principle in writing the Rights of Man. . . ." 3

Paine's biographers have accepted his claim at face value. R. R. Fennessey, for example, asserts that Paine's "political ideas were completely a priori, and he was incapable of modifying them to suit the facts." 4 Obviously this is what Paine wanted readers to believe. But it is far from an accurate picture of Paine's ideological development. A more critical review of Paine's French Revolutionary writings, particularly Rights of Man, reveals fundamental change in his ideas. Tom Paine's radicalism was not prefabricated, but grew out of his own participation in France during the early years of the Revolution. As a result, his ideology was not simply modified, it was transformed.

Any analysis of Rights of Man must begin with the observation that it was written and published in two separate sections. Part One was completed in early 1791 and was in London bookshops by February of that year. Its purpose was to refute Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, published four months earlier. Part Two was written during the second half of 1791 and published in February, 1792. Even before Part Two appeared Paine's public expected it to be a sequel to Part One. "Its title is to be a repetition of the former 'Rights of Man,' " announced one London newspaper, "of which the words, 'Part the Second' will show that it is a continuation." 5 Indeed, Paine himself emphasized this connection between the two parts in his preface to Part

3 Complete Writings, II, 1491.
Two: "When I began the chapter entitled the 'Conclusion' in the former part of the Rights of Man, published last year, it was my intention to have extended it to a greater length...." Later in the same preface Paine offered "another reason for deferring the remainder of the work... that Mr. Burke promised in his first publication to renew the subject at another opportunity.... I therefore held myself in reserve for him."\(^6\)

Biographers have taken Paine's remarks at face value and assume that the two parts deliver essentially the same message. Paine's Part Two, they agree, "went on with the belabouring of Burke and was equally successful."\(^7\) At best, the more sensitive of Paine scholars believe that while Paine's rhetoric in Part Two may have become more militant, exhibiting "a ' jovial ferocity' toward sacred institutions," his ideas did not really change. "The shibboleths are the same," notes David Freeman Hawke, "but the tone of the attack has changed."\(^8\)

But a careful examination of Rights of Man reveals that much more changed than simply rhetorical tone. In fact Part Two is not a sequel to Part One. The two parts have little in common, each espousing contradictory ideologies. The first fits squarely with what later came to be known as (nineteenth-century European) Liberalism, which argued for a constitutional monarchy based upon political freedom but an unequal electoral system. The other ideology found in Rights of Man is properly known as (nineteenth-century European) Radicalism: democratic republicanism based upon universal manhood suffrage and a commitment to the amelioration of the lower classes through significant social and economic legislation. Today the distinction between Liberalism and Radicalism may have become somewhat blurred. But from 1789 to at least 1848 these two ideological systems stood in as much opposition to each other as Socialism and Communism would after 1917. Some of the last century's most famous political struggles, such as English Chartism or the French Bloody June Days of 1848, suggest the potency of the conflict between Liberals and Radicals. During the French Revolution and the first part of the nineteenth century, therefore, Radicalism was not simply a more progressive variant of Liberalism (just as Communism was not simply a more progressive variant of Socialism), but rather Radicalism constituted a profound critique of Liberalism's anti-democratic features.\(^9\) Paine's Rights of Man is a work at odds with itself.

\(^6\) Thomas Paine, Rights of Man, ed. Eric Foner (Harmondsworth, 1984), 153. All citations will be from this Penguin Books edition, referred to as RoM.


\(^8\) Hawke, Paine, 241-42. See also Conway, Thomas Paine, I, 332; and Alfred Owen Aldridge, Man of Reason: The Life of Thomas Paine (Philadelphia, 1959), 157.

\(^9\) On these ideologies see Guido de Ruggiero, The History of European Liberalism, tr. R. G. Collingwood (Boston, 1959), 66-77, 99-108, 370-80, and, for the nineteenth
There is one curious fact about Part One that has eluded Paine scholars. In an essay that defends the principles and events of the early Revolution, it is remarkable that Paine chose to discuss only one revolutionary leader: the Marquis de Lafayette. Incredibly, neither Sieyès nor Mirabeau, neither the Lameths nor Barnave, neither Robespierre nor any other politician or revolutionary writer was ever discussed in Part One. Still, Paine returned to Lafayette at five different points in the essay. For Tom Paine—at least for the Paine of 1790—the French Revolution belonged to Lafayette.10

The portrayal of Lafayette in Part One is highly significant, and it illustrates Paine’s own political position within French Revolutionary politics. Lafayette was certainly among the most powerful and influential revolutionary politicians in France. Indeed, the early years of the Revolution (1789-91) are often called “The Years of Lafayette.”11 As a member of the Constituent Assembly, founder of political clubs in Paris, and head of the capital’s newly-established local militia, the Paris National Guard, Lafayette wielded enormous power.

Under Lafayette and his followers, usually called the Fayettists or Patriot Party, the National Assembly accomplished a great deal during the period between the passage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in August 1789 and the publication of Rights of Man Part One in March 1791. They nationalized church lands, abolished various “feudal” laws and taxes, established a suspensive royal veto, reorganized the country into eighty-three departments, and approved plans for a unicameral legislature. But that was as far as Lafayette wanted the Revolution to go.

The Fayettists believed in a liberal constitutional monarchy in which the power of king, church, and corporate bodies was severely limited; but like their Whig counterparts in Britain, they also tried to exclude the populace from participating directly in political affairs. In October 1789 the Fayettists easily maneuvered the Constituent Assembly to pass a decree restricting those eligible to vote in elections to taxpayers who paid direct taxes worth three days’ labor; and at the same time they got the Assembly to pass a law that restricted those voters eligible for national political office to men who paid annual direct taxes equivalent to a marc...

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10 RoM, 45, 53, 62, 95, 115, and 121. Only two French Revolutionary leaders are even mentioned in passing in the text: Bailly (63) and Sieyès (105).
d’argent (silver mark), worth about fifty-four days’ labor. These new electoral laws effectively split the nation into active and passive citizens, the latter having full civil rights but limited political rights.

This repudiation of French democracy did not go unchallenged. Robespierre strongly objected to the new laws from the floor of the Constituent Assembly. But his views were soundly defeated by the Fayettist majority. The real struggle for democracy did not occur there but in the new Paris municipal institutions, the communal and district assemblies, where Paine’s future “Girondin” allies, including politicians such as Condorcet and Brissot, were trying to establish a democratic municipality. Brissot, for example, was thrilled when Condorcet became the president of the Paris Communal Assembly because it meant that “the democratic party will always dominate it.”

Thus beginning in the fall of 1789 a democratic movement composed of well-known politicians and writers rose to challenge the Fayettist hegemony of the Revolution. Among the democrats were men who would soon become Paine’s closest French allies. For two years they would wage a cold war against the Fayettists for control of national politics, a struggle that became violent after the king’s infamous flight to Varennes in June 1791, when any hope for a liberal constitutional monarchy was put in serious jeopardy. My point is not simply that until 1791 Paine had been a Fayettist supporter; even more significantly, his support for Lafayette had much to do with Rights of Man. No one has ever doubted that Part One was an attack upon Burke’s conservative ideas; but what has been less clear is that it also signified a repudiation of Parisian radicalism.

Far from exporting democratic republicanism from America to France in 1789, Paine ignored the democratic aspirations of Paris radicals. As early as September 1789 he had privately endorsed Thomas Jefferson’s belief that “a tranquility is well established in Paris and tolerably well throughout the countryside,” which would allow the Constituent Assembly to establish “a good constitution which will in its principles and merits be about a middle term between that of England and America.”


It is hard to justify calling Paine a democrat given his acceptance of this "middle term," when radicals were pressing for significant political changes.

In January 1790 tension mounted between Fayettists and radicals. When the Constituent Assembly reiterated its support for the marc d'argent, Condorcet attacked the Assembly, charging that this legislation was "dangerous for liberty." Condorcet predicted that its inclusion into the constitution would "establish a legal inequality against those you have declared equal in rights."

More dangerously, on 22 January Lafayette took 3000 troops into the Cordeliers district, the headquarters of democratic radicalism, to arrest the notorious journalist Jean-Paul Marat. The President of the district, soon-to-be famous Georges-Jacques Danton, refused to surrender Marat to the authorities. While street violence was avoided, the confrontation was not forgotten. Never against would the radicals trust the political leadership of the Fayettists.

Curiously, it was at this very moment that we catch the first glimpse of Rights of Man. (Paine had come to Paris in November 1789 and would return to London in March 1790.) On 12 January (some nine months before Burke's Reflections appeared) Lafayette wrote to George Washington that Paine was "writing for you a brochure in which you will see a portion of my adventures." Since Part One was dedicated to Washington, scholars agree that Lafayette was here referring to an early draft of Rights of Man. This means that Rights of Man was begun in January 1790 as an apology for Lafayette at the very instant when that statesman was under attack for his anti-democratic policies. It is even more interesting that on 17 January 1790 Paine had written a friendly letter from Paris to none other than Edmund Burke. "If we distinguish the Revolution from the Constitution," Paine commented, "we may say that the first is compleat, and the second is in a fair prospect of being so." The constitution Paine refers to here would have prevented most of the adult...

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The manuscript for Condorcet's speech is in the Archives de la Seine, VD12, 48-57. It was first published in Bonneville's Cercle Social [February 1790], letter 8, 57-75. See also Mareel Dorigny, "Les Girondins et le droit de propriété," Bulletin de la Commission d'histoire économique et sociale de la Révolution française (1980-81), 15-31.


Quoted in Aldridge, Man of Reason, 126-33.

Correspondence of Edmund Burke, 68. On the relationship between Paine and Burke see Thomas W. Copeland, Our Eminent Friend Edmund Burke. Six Essays (New Haven, 1949), 146-82.
male population from holding seats in the national assembly. The "we" in Paine's remark may have been an indirect reference to Lafayette, but it never could have included Condorcet and the rest of the Paris radicals.

By January 1790, then, Paine envisioned *Rights of Man* to be a vindication of the Revolution won by Lafayette. No wonder he ignored all other leaders, including the radicals, and focused exclusively upon his hero. Only when he caught wind in April that Burke was about to publish a complete renunciation of the Revolution did Paine shrewdly decide to change rhetorical strategies and turn the pamphlet into a response to Burke. The point, however, is that this change marked no similar transformation in Paine's ideas; if anything, his loyalty to Lafayette was intensified.

Thus *Rights of Man* Part One does not belong to the burgeoning democratic movement that surfaced between 1789-91 in opposition to the leaders of the Constituent Assembly. Instead, it belongs to that vast outpouring of literature which defended the Fayettist interpretation of the French Revolution. What that literature suggests is that the essential difference between a Fayettist Patriot and a democrat before 1792 was the latter's faith in the ability of the ordinary citizen to participate fully in political affairs.

In *Rights of Man* Part One Paine's Fayettism is nakedly revealed in at least three places: first, his defense of the *marc d'argent*; second, his criticism of the popular executions of Bertier and Foulon; and finally, his discussion of the march to Versailles during the October Days.

Given the sharp criticism of the *marc d'argent* by 1791, it is significant that Paine did not attack it in *Rights of Man*, but replied to Burke's ironic attack upon the electoral laws by endorsing them, albeit in a twisted and opaque language: "The Constitution of France says, That every man who pays a tax of sixty sous per annum ... is an elector. What article will Mr. Burke place against this? Can anything be more limited, and at the same time more capricious, than the qualifications of electors in England?" Courting primarily an Anglo-American readership, Paine pointed out that at least the French laws were still more progressive than the English. But this weak defense of Lafayette's policies ignored the large and noisy groups of Paris radicals who argued that the electoral laws of both countries were anti-democratic. Thus his arguments should not simply be interpreted as a defense against Burke; they also reveal Paine's own anti-democratic attitudes.

Perhaps it is unfair to judge a foreigner according to the same standards we might judge Paris politicians. After all, what more could be expected from a British reformer in 1791? That question, however, is easily answered by glancing at another British pamphlet that appeared within a month of Paine's. In James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*,

18 *RoM*, 73.
the laws restricting suffrage were passionately attacked and the leaders of the Constituent Assembly were sharply criticized:

Here I must cordially agree with Mr. Burke in reproving the impotent and preposterous qualification by which the Assembly have disenfranchised every citizen who does not pay a direct contribution equivalent to the price of three days’ labour. Nothing can be more evident than its inefficacy for any purpose but the display of inconsistency, and the violation of justice. . . . [It] stained the infant constitution with this absurd usurpation. 19

Here in Mackintosh one finds a democratic ideology that is simply absent in Paine.

Louis-Benigne Bertier de Savigny, the last royal intendent of Paris, was arrested within days of the Bastille’s fall. Under intense pressure from the Paris crowd, municipal authorities agreed to an immediate trial. But when Lafayette tried to delay the trial and have Bertier imprisoned, the crowd intervened. Bertier was dragged into the streets and hung on a lamppost.

Coincidentally, Bertier’s father-in-law, the financier and former Controller-General Joseph-François Foulon, had been arrested at the same time on an unrelated charge. When the crowd learned that he was in the vicinity of the Bertier execution, someone shot him. Lafayette, who as Commander of the Paris National Guard was in charge of maintaining law and order in the capital, resigned over the episodes. But neither the mayor nor the Paris Communal Assembly accepted his resignation. 20

The immediate response of the popular press helps to put Paine’s later reaction into proper perspective. Within a week of the murders one of the capital’s most popular papers, the Révolutions de Paris, edited by the staunch democrat, Élisée Loustalot, offered a lengthy description and analysis of the executions in the radical language of popular sovereignty. For Loustalot, both Bertier and Foulon had got what was coming to them. While Bertier had been a “slave to the great” and a “vicious courtisan,” Foulon “was hated and even despised” for the “obnoxious monopolies hid from an angry public.” Describing the murders in terms that were shockingly graphic even for that age, Loustalot nonetheless believed that the actions demonstrated “the terrible vengeance of a people justly upset.” In these murders Loustalot saw the essence of the Revolution: a just people overthrowing a despotistic regime in their own popular way. “Your hatred is revolting, it is terrifying,” Loustalot admitted to his readers, “but remember how shameful it is to live in slavery!” 21


20 Gottschalk and Maddox, Lafayette, I, 145-54.

21 Révolutions de Paris, no. 2, 18-25 July 1789, 55-62. We know that Paine had read this paper from his footnote on p. 64 of RoM: “An account of the expedition to Versailles
Edmund Burke had a very different reaction to these murders. The "old Parisian ferocity has broken out in a shocking manner," he wrote to a friend on 9 August 1789.

It is true, that this may be no more than a sudden explosion: If so no indication can be taken from it. But if it should be character rather than accident, then that people are not fit for Liberty, and must have a Strong hand like that of their former masters to coerce them. . . . To form a constitution requires wisdom as well as spirit.22

This view is sharply opposed to Loustalot's. For a radical democrat like Loustalot, politics must embody the will of the people; for a Whig like Burke, politics must embody wisdom and deference. Thus even if Burke approved of the Revolution in general—he was still making up his mind in August 1789—he could never justify the actions of a popular lynch mob. By the time Burke published the Reflections, he used these types of crowd actions to demonstrate the complete chaos and lawlessness inherent in the Revolution.

When Tom Paine sat down fifteen months later to write Rights of Man Part One, he thus had at least two ideologies available to him when he came to the section analyzing the Foulon and Bertier murders. Significantly, Paine rejected the language of the Paris democrats and chose a discourse that was remarkably close to Burke's. "There is in all European countries," he wrote, "a large class of people of that description which in England is called the 'mob,' " who,

incensed at the appearance of Foulon and Bertier, tore them from their conductors before they were carried to the Hotel de Ville, and executed them on the spot. Why then does Mr. Burke charge outrages of this kind on a whole people? . . . These outrages were not the effect of the principles of the Revolution, but of the degraded mind that existed before the Revolution, and which the Revolution is calculated to reform.23

Compared to Loustalot, Paine displayed a self-conscious disagreement with Burke that seems superficial. Paine might have defended the crowd's actions on the grounds of revolutionary justice; certainly, neither Lafayette nor the Paris government had any doubts regarding the guilt of the two men. After all, the incidents occurred during the first days of a revolution; what better symbol of the old order was there than the capital's intendant and a financier who had taken advantage of the nation's fiscal

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22 Burke, Correspondence, 10.
problems? Paine might at least have excused crowd actions as zealotry, thereby demonstrating the public's intense approval for the new regime.

But he did not. Instead, Paine largely sided with Burke in seeing the crowd as an irrational "mob," which had no sense of justice or patriotism. Burke argued that the crowd typified the revolution because it embodied anarchy; Paine agreed with Burke's views on mobs and this position forced him into the slippery argument that the activities of the Paris crowd did not belong to the Revolution. Apparently, therefore, the mark of a great revolutionary, such as Lafayette, lay in his ability to manage the populace. "In the commencement of a Revolution," Paine wrote of the street activists, "those men are rather the followers of the camp than the standard of liberty, and have yet to be instructed how to reverence it." 24

That Paine shared Lafayette's obsession for the restoration of order is again demonstrated when the Marquis was once more pitted against "the mob" during the October Days. Describing the popular women's march to Versailles as essentially "mischief," Paine praised Lafayette for saving the king from "the mob" and thus preserving the Revolution from anarchy: "As soon therefore as a sufficient force could be collected, M. de Lafayette, by orders from the civil authority of Paris, set off after them at the head of twenty thousand of the Paris militia. The revolution could derive no benefit from confusion, and its opposers might." 25 Here is the essence of the Fayettist ideology: Lafayette embodied the Revolution in its difficult task of constructing a new order. The people are not really villainous but submissive actors, no doubt misguided partly by their own ignorance and partly by the machinations of counter-revolutionaries. In Paine's rhetoric the people who brought the king and queen back to Paris were certainly not heroes.

Again, we need to emphasize, if only because the myth of Paine's democratic ideas remains so pervasive among Paine scholars, that there were other reformers writing at the same time, such as Mackintosh, who rejected this Fayettist rhetoric. In the Vindiciae Gallicae, for example, the patriotic common sense of "the people" has replaced Paine's violent "mob": "A degree of influence exerted by the people... must be expected in the crisis of a Revolution which the people have made... that, therefore, the conduct of the populace of Paris should not have been the most circumspect... was, in the nature of things, inevitable." In contrast to Paine, Mackintosh expected the crowd to enact their own style of popular politics in the streets.

Likewise, Mackintosh was not offended by the October Days but saw

24 RoM, 59. Incidentally, years after the Revolution Lafayette admitted that Foulon had been a corrupt statesmen who had earned the "people's hatred." See the Mémoires, correspondance et manuscrits du Général Lafayette (6 vols.; Paris, 1837-38), II, 274.

25 RoM, 62.
in them the expression of popular justice. "The march to Versailles," Mackintosh wrote, "seems to have been the spontaneous movement of an alarmed populace" who had good reasons to demand "the king to change his residence to Paris." What made Mackintosh's rhetoric democratic was that in his interpretation, the people do not follow the politicians, but were rather the driving force of the Revolution; they and not their leaders controlled political affairs.26

Rights of Man Part One, of course, was written in English for an Anglo-American audience. Its purpose was to stimulate a peaceful Fayettist revolution in Britain. Thus while Paine disagrees sharply with Burke over political principles, there is no real debate over the extent to which "the people" ought to participate in political affairs. Paine's focus is rather on the nature of monarchy in France, and here too Paine is more moderate than republicans might expect. Against Burke's prediction that the French Revolution would destroy monarchy, Paine came dangerously close to defending Louis XVI:

It was not against Louis the XVIth, but against the despotic principles of the government, that the nation revolted. . . . The monarch and the Monarchy were distinct and separate things; and it was against the established despotism of the latter, and not against the person or principles of the former, that the revolt commenced. . . .27

Against the background of traditional Enlightenment views of despotism, such as the one found in Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, Paine's argument sounds strange. How could there be despotism without a despot? How could despotism be attacked without the despot himself receiving the first blow? Nonetheless, Paine insisted that pre-revolutionary France was, in fact, a despotism without a despot. Displaying an attitude toward monarchy that was very different from the one found in Common Sense, Paine portrayed Louis XVI as a passive and neutral king, even "known to be a friend of the nation."28 The despotism begun during the reign of Louis XIV had simply expanded beyond the control of the despot. Louis XVI could not have reformed the system even if he had wanted to.

For the Paine of Part One the French Revolution was above all against despotism but not monarchy itself. Since the key attribute of despotism was that it lacked a constitution, the prime objective of the French Revolution was not to overthrow the monarchy, but rather to make the monarchy constitutional. "Mr. Burke said in a speech last winter in parliament," Paine remarked,

26 Mackintosh, Vindiciae Gallicae, 181, 193-94.
27 RoM, 47.
28 Ibid. Compare with Common Sense: "There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy . . ." (Complete Writings, I, 8).
that when the National Assembly first met in three Orders... France had then a good constitution. This shows, among numerous other instances, that Mr. Burke does not understand what a constitution is. The persons so met were not a constitution, but a convention, to make a constitution.  

Thus the central distinction found in Rights of Man Part One is not between aristocracy and democracy or between monarchy and republic but between absolute monarchy (which Paine called "hereditary despotism of the monarchy") and constitutional monarchy.

It must be emphasized that in this first part of Rights of Man, Paine went no further than this relatively moderate position. There was no call to make France a republic; nor was there any insistence that the French Revolution become democratic.

As soon as Rights of Man Part One was published in February 1791, Paine returned to France. When he arrived in Paris, he found that the political climate in the capital was more polarized and embittered than at any time since the taking of the Bastille. Although a democratic movement had been developing since the fall of 1789, it was only now receiving support from large segments of the Paris public. A series of small but significant events had made Parisians realize that the Constituent Assembly had no real commitment to making France democratic. The activists with whom Paine made friends, and would be associated with for the rest of his political career in France—politicians such as Condorcet, Brisot, Bonneville, and the Rolands—had become thoroughly frustrated with the Fayettists and no longer had faith in their ability to lead the Revolution forward. For example, Paine's French translator, François Lanthenas, reported that his good friend Madame Roland "has been to the National Assembly" and "is now convinced that liberty and the constitution will not belong to and do not belong to, the men who have given the most to the Revolution." And a few days later Madame Roland herself scolded the Fayettists for holding views that were "false" and "dangerous."  

Louis XVI's infamous flight to Varennes was the final step that converted Paine and his friends to the view that only a democratic republic could save the French Revolution. Behind the king's betrayal the Brisotins saw Lafayette's Machiavellian designs. "It is virtually impossible that Lafayette is not involved," wrote Madame Roland after learning of the flight. Immediately Brissot, Condorcet, and Paine became "the rec-

29 Ibid., 72.
30 Ibid., 47.
31 Lettres de Madame Roland, ed. Claude Perroud (2 vols.; Paris, 1900-1902), II, 206, 240. The best survey of this period is Marcel Reinhard, La Chute de la royauté, 10 août 1792 (Paris, 1969). On the deterioration of Lafayette's reputation among Paris democrats see also Kates, Cercle Social, 138-51; Censer, Prelude to Power, 100-107, 144.
ognized chiefs of a republican party.” They put out a journal, *Le Républicain ou Le Défenseur du gouvernement représentatif*, whose influence among Paris clubs was important. Yet despite their efforts Madame Roland did not believe that Lafayette’s grip on the government could be broken: “Lafayette is more powerful than ever. His game is more developed and better received than we had supposed . . . he has the force of the army; he has a reserve of blind partisans; he has allied himself closely with the group of opportunists in the Assembly.”

Paine is often given credit for educating his friends in the new radical ideology. But considering Paine’s previous lack of commitment to the radical movement, there is much evidence that it was French radicals who helped convert Paine to democracy and republicanism in June 1791. For example, in *Rights of Man* Part Two there is an important section in which Paine defined a republic as a “res-publica, the public affairs, or the public good, or literally translated, the public thing.” This section was lifted practically verbatim from his friend Bonneville’s daily newspaper, *Bouche de fer*. “En définissant le mot ré-publique,” wrote Bonneville four days after the king’s flight, “et le traduisant littéralement dans notre langue, car c’est un mot latin *res-publica*, toute obscurité va disparaître . . . La ré-publique, n’est autre chose littéralement que la chose commune, la chose publique, la grande communauté nationale, LE GOUVERNEMENT NATIONAL.” Likewise, there is no evidence that Paine had progressed very far in writing Part Two until after his return to England. For commentators like Fennessey to suggest that Paine had always been a pronounced democrat and had never learned anything “from his extensive experience of American and French politics” is grossly mistaken: however much he would later deny it, Paine’s democratic republicanism developed and matured because of what he and his friends witnessed in the streets of Paris during the tumultuous period surrounding the king’s flight to Varennes.

Any further movement towards a democratic republic was soon repressed by Lafayette and his supporters in the Constituent Assembly. They refused to abolish the monarchy, forgave the king for all misdeeds as long as he professed support for the constitution, and prepared plans for liquidating the democratic movement. The climax of this anti-democratic campaign was the Massacre at the Champ de Mars, where on 17 July 1791 Lafayette’s troops fired on a crowd of Parisians holding a peaceful republican rally. The suppression of the democrats was successful from Lafayette’s viewpoint, insofar as order was restored in the city and

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34 *RoM*, 178; *Bouche de fer*, 25 June 1791, 1-4.
Louis XVI and the Assembly were able to ratify the new constitution. "Yes, the National Guards are the instruments of oppression, the satellites of an abominable man," cried Madame Roland on the day of the Massacre. "We can say that the counter-revolution is being made at Paris by the majority of the National Assembly and the armed forces with Lafayette at the head." 36

Nevertheless, Lafayette's victory was ephemeral. Unable to run for office in the new Legislative Assembly (months earlier all members of the Constituent Assembly had disqualified themselves), he and his allies quickly lost their power base. Into the political void stepped Brissot, Condorcet, and their supporters. These Girondins were frustrated by a monarchical constitution that was too conservative for their tastes. They looked to a new war to help minimize the influence of the king and maximize possibilities for French democracy. By January, 1792, the Girondins controlled both the Jacobin Club and the Legislative Assembly. In February they forced the king to replace his Foyettist ministers (who opposed any war) with Roland and Etienne Clavière, Brissot's close allies. A few weeks later, France declared war upon Austria. In the midst of these developments appeared Rights of Man Part Two. 37

The schism between Paine and the Foyettists is dramatically displayed in the bizarre and awkward dedication "To M. Lafayette," that makes up the first pages of Part Two. 38 Paine acknowledged his break with Lafayette. But he claimed that the essential differences between them had to do not with "principles" but with "time." In brief but pungent prose, Paine argued that Lafayette was a misguided patriot, but he refused to call him a counter-revolutionary. Paine's attitude towards Lafayette was condescending but not hostile. Paine viewed Liberalism as only a temporary phase, with Radicalism's victory inevitable. "I wish you to hasten your principles, and overtake me," he urged Lafayette. Paine desperately needed to explain the relationship between Liberalism and Radicalism as developmental rather than oppositional, if the fiction of a "sequel" was to make any sense. Otherwise, he would leave the door open to charges that he and his hero had been opposed to progress and perhaps were even traitors to the cause of democracy.

The first pages of Part Two, therefore, announced that Paine and his hero had gone their separate ways. Nonetheless, the next few pages go over territory covered in Part One, repeating "the belabouring of Burke," until suddenly Paine comes clean with his readers, letting them know that unlike Part One, Part Two was not a response to Burke's Reflections: "Mr. Burke has talked of old and new whigs. If he can amuse himself with childish names and distinctions, I shall not interrupt his pleasure.

36 Lettres de Madame Roland, II, 336.
38 RoM, 151-52.
It is not to him, but to the Abbé Sieyès, that I address this chapter. 39

If we take this statement together with Paine’s dedication to Lafayette, it becomes clear that Rights of Man Part Two was never intended as an attack upon Burke, but rather a serious challenge to the leadership of Lafayette and Sieyès. This point—often ignored by Paine scholars still obsessed with the Burke/Paine debate—is the key to understanding the real purpose and ideology of Part Two. 40

Why Sieyès? Between 1789 and 1791 Sieyès was an ally (though sometimes a strained one) of Lafayette. But while Lafayette was primarily a soldier and a statesman, Sieyès’s most important contribution was as a thinker. His What is the Third Estate? (January 1789) became the most important French pamphlet of the period, inspiring the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. And as a member of the Constituent Assembly’s Constitution Committee, Sieyès had considerable opportunity to translate his ideas into legislation. Under the direct influence of Adam Smith’s Wealth of Nations, Sieyès argued that only those citizens who contributed to the national economy ought to participate in political life. Those citizens not able to become productive workers would be protected by the laws, but would have no right to make the laws. This idea, outlined in What is the Third Estate?, became the germ for the anti-democratic laws establishing the marc d’argent, which were, not surprisingly, written by Sieyès. 41

Rights of Man Part Two was not the first battle in print between Paine and Sieyès. Immediately following the king’s flight to Varennes in June-July 1791, Sieyès published an article in the Moniteur, the most important French daily, challenging anyone to defend republicanism over monarchy. Paine accepted the challenge, and he published a short response in Le Républicain. Thus Rights of Man Part Two should be viewed within the context of an ongoing debate with Sieyès over republican principles. In that sense Rights of Man is something of a paradox: where Part One defended the Fayanist Revolution, Part Two repudiated Fayenist ideology. 42

If Paine was a spokesman for Lafayette in Rights of Man Part One, Rights of Man Part Two echoed the Girondins. The new element in Part

39 RoM, 171.
40 Only Conway comes close to recognizing Sieyès’s role. See his Thomas Paine, 1, 328-29.
42 On this exchange between Sieyès and Paine, see Aldridge, “Condorcet et Paine,” 51-57. Aldridge makes a persuasive case that the debate was staged, suggesting that after the king’s flight Sieyès himself had at least secretly become a republican. But more recently, Murray Forsyth (Reason and Revolution, 176-79) has reconfirmed Sieyès’s commitment to monarchy.
Two was Paine's emphasis on "the representative system." Although Paine had mentioned representative government in passing in Part One, he now developed the concept of representative democracy into a mature theoretical framework. Paine acknowledged the debt modern democracies owed to ancient Greece. But he, like many thinkers during the Enlightenment, also recognized that it was impossible for large nation-states to imitate the Athenian model. Paine wanted a system in which representation would become the keystone for democratic political institutions. "By ingrafting representation upon democracy," Paine said, "we arrive at a system of government capable of embracing and confederating all the various interests and every extent of territory and population."\textsuperscript{43}

This new kind of political system had no place for monarchy. "Every government that does not act on the principle of a Republic," he wrote, "is not a good government." Although a democratic monarchy was a theoretical possibility (one toyed with by several Revolutionary leaders, including Mirabeau and Robespierre), the Paine of Part Two viewed it as "eccentric government" and realized that only a representative democratic republic could provide the kind of freedom he desired. Consequently, Paine's model of an admirable state changed from Part One to Part Two: because France in February 1792 was not yet a democratic republic, Paine advised his readers to look towards the United States: "It is on this system that the American government is founded. It is representation ingrafted upon democracy." In Part One, in spite of his focus upon Lafayette, Paine had rarely mentioned the United States. Since he was defending a constitutional monarchy the example of 1776 was somewhat irrelevant. Ironically, America only became central to Paine's arguments when he dropped Lafayette in Part Two.\textsuperscript{44}

Paine's understanding of the nature of revolutionary change also changed from Part One to Part Two. In the first pamphlet Paine had hoped that other nations would choose to imitate the French in a short, peaceful, and above all rational transfer of sovereignty. But when Paine called for revolution to become "the order of the day" in Part Two, he meant something else. In Part One Paine expressed the belief that some kings, such as Louis XVI, were decent enough to hold national office. But Part Two returns to the view he espoused in Common Sense in which all kings were criminals, since all monarchies were "originally a tyranny, founded on an invasion and conquest of the country." That is why, Paine asserted, monarchies were inherently expansionist and militaristic. "War is their trade, plunder and revenue their objects." This kind of govern-

\textsuperscript{43} RoM, 180.

\textsuperscript{44} RoM, 178-80. See also 125, where America is praised largely for its inexpensive government.
ment, so different from the possibility of the kind of pacifist constitutional monarchy suggested in Part One, was unable to reform itself.\textsuperscript{45}

In Part One, Paine hoped that the French Revolution would lead the world by example. But in Part Two that leadership took a more direct and more violent form: the French were expected to wage war on the rest of Europe, liberating the peoples of Europe from their old regimes. The first step was “the extinction of German despotism.” But Germany was not enough. Only “when France shall be surrounded with revolutions” will she “be in peace and safety.” And only through war could that goal be achieved quickly and efficiently. In Part One, the revolutionary process was described as pacifist and piecemeal. But now, reflecting Girondin foreign policy, Paine envisioned a war that would create a string of democratic republics from England to the Russian border, a war that led him to predict the death of monarchy: “I do not believe,” Paine declared, “that monarchy and aristocracy will continue seven years longer in any of the enlightened countries in Europe.”\textsuperscript{46}

In contrast to Part One, then, Part Two was indeed radical; clearly without Part Two, \textit{Rights of Man} would not have become the bible among nineteenth-century working-class Radicals.\textsuperscript{47} Part Two, for example, advocates the abolition of all monarchy and the establishment of democratic republics based upon universal manhood suffrage. More importantly, its fifth chapter includes a social component, in which Paine argued for a graduated income tax, as well as health and old-age insurance, foreshadowing the idea of the welfare state. Obviously nothing in Part One had even hinted at these new and daring proposals.

The Girondins themselves were aware of the inconsistency between the two parts. Brissot’s close friend, François Lanthenas, did not translate the work until after Part Two was complete. His edition appeared in April or May 1792 and was published by the most significant Girondin publishing house, the Imprimerie du Cercle Social. Nonetheless, Lanthenas edited the work in a curious fashion. First, he eliminated the preface to Part Two because, as he put it,

\begin{quote}
Owing to the prejudices that still govern \textit{that nation}, the author has been obliged to condescend to answer Mr. Burke. He has done so more especially in an extended preface which is nothing but a piece of very tedious controversy, in which he shows himself very sensitive to criticisms that do not really affect him. To translate it seemed an insult to the \textit{free French people}.
\end{quote}

Clearly Paine’s French friends did not see \textit{Rights of Man} as primarily a

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textit{RoM}, 161, 192-93.
\item \textit{RoM}, 151-52, 156.
\end{footnotes}
response to Burke. The French version also eliminated the dedication to Lafayette. Not only did Lanthenas admonish Paine for addressing himself before Burke, but he refused to allow Paine to humble himself before Lafayette. "Paine, that uncorrupted friend of freedom," wrote Lanthenas, "believed too in the sincerity of Lafayette," a naiveté which Lanthenas believed proved that Paine had much to learn from the French. "Bred at a distance from courts, that austere American does not seem any more on his guard against the artful ways and speech courtiers than some Frenchmen who resemble him." By deleting the preface against Burke and the dedication to Lafayette, which had linked the two parts rhetorically, if not substantively, Lanthenas not only firmly established Part Two as an anti-Fayettist text, but he also drew attention to the problematic relationship between the two parts. This may explain why French reviews of Rights of Man were relatively cool and even critical, a fact that has perplexed Paine's biographers.49

Lanthenas' editorial efforts make clear that Paine united two works whose ideologies were contradictory. Why did Paine not renounce Lafayette more sharply in 1792, as Brissot and his colleagues were willing to do, and simply publish Part Two as a kind of Girondin manifesto? Insofar as Paine refused to attack Lafayette, he allowed his own political theory to decline into a cult of personality. His relationship with Lafayette also explains why Paine retreated from the staunch republicanism of Common Sense and endorsed the constitutional monarchy of Louis XVI.

During the 1770s Lafayette had become the best known European supporter of the American Revolution. And Americans were deeply proud that this young liberal nobleman admired their new state. When Lafayette took a leading role in the French Revolution, Anglo-American supporters naively supposed that he was offering France the lessons that he had learned in America. "He took a practical existing model, in operation here," commented John Quincy Adams speaking for American public opinion, "and never attempted or wished more than to apply it faithfully to his own country."50 Perhaps we can forgive the American president for this naive interpretation, but certainly Paine ought to have


known better. Nonetheless, Paine was keenly aware that representing Lafayette as this kind of a symbol could enhance his own star as well.

Paine wanted readers to see the entire era characterized by the universal progress of human rights, a process whose unity was best embodied by Lafayette and himself. By 1792 only Lafayette and Paine had played a major role in both the American and French Revolutions; both of them could be used to represent a linkage among the American and French Revolutions that would make British parliamentary reform appear urgent and inevitable.

For us Rights of Man reveals an ideologue’s desperate search to maintain some shred of intellectual consistency during a period of intense revolutionary change. So long as the Revolution constituted a united Third Estate against an entrenched and privileged aristocracy, Paine’s ideas could be endorsed by all reformers. But the moment that the Third Estate began to argue among itself—a process that began as early as the fall of 1789, Paine’s ideology could no longer represent the entire Revolution but only the dominant faction. As the gap between Faiettists and radicals widened between 1789 and 1791 over fundamental issues regarding democracy and republicanism, Paine’s ideological frame became even more problematic. By the time Rights of Man Part One was published in March 1791 its ideology had already moved far to the right on the spectrum of French Revolutionary politics. Within four months he dropped his Faiettist endorsements and wrote Part Two as if it were a sequel. But what the Girondins chose to minimize, their Montagnard rivals later sought to exploit: Paine spent the year of the Terror in prison, and while he would go on to write works of major importance, his political career was over.

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